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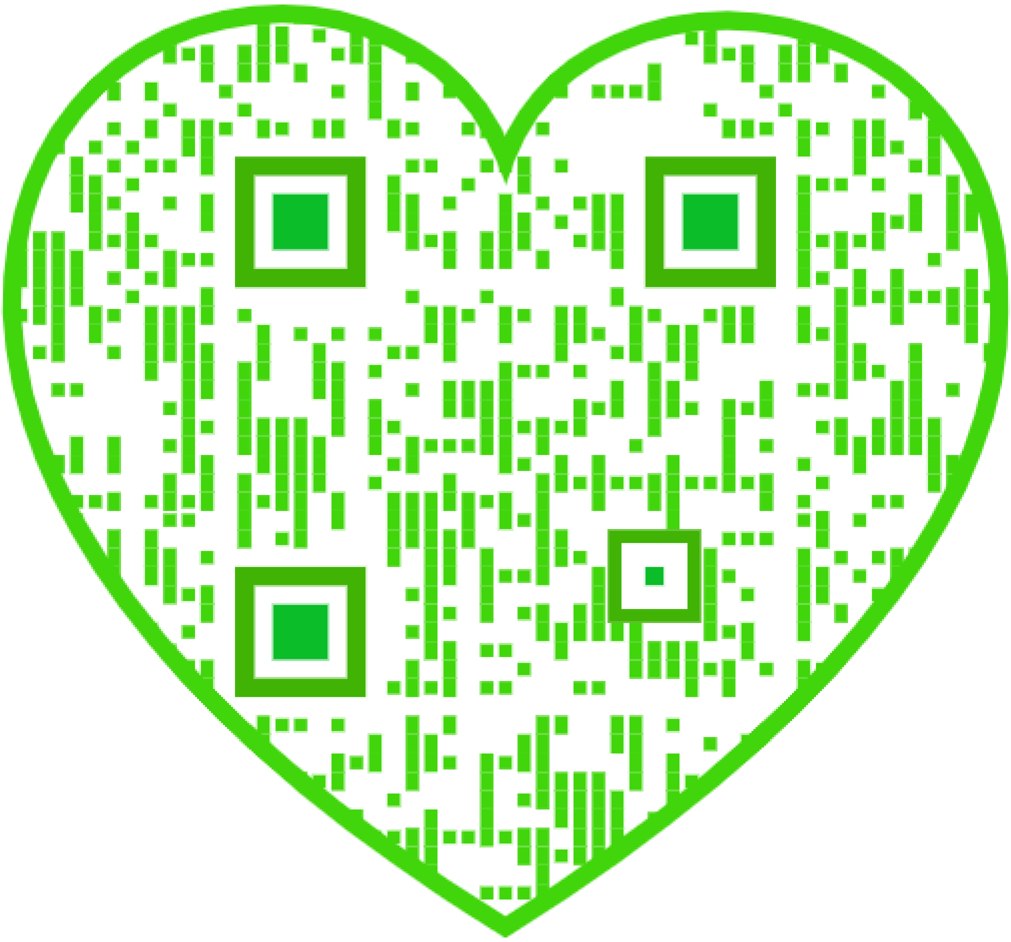

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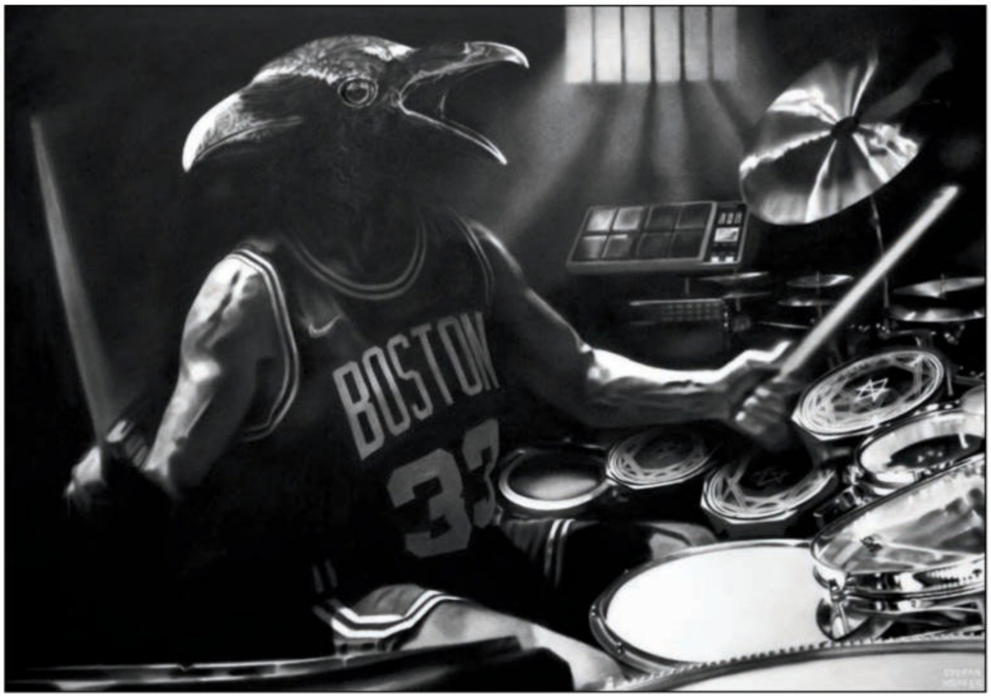

"Noise", 2024 by Stefan Wepfer, 100 x 70 cm, Nitram Powdered Charcoal on Fabriano "Artistico", extra white, satined, 300 gr/m²

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Inspired by the intricate rhythms and mystical atmosphere of progressive music, Stefan Wepfer created a charcoal drawing that captures movement, precision, and depth. Fascinated by innovative drumming techniques rooted in geometric patterns, Wepfer crafted a piece that blends technical mastery with artistic expression.

The composition, drawn from music and visual elements, centers on a dynamic drum set, symbolizing rhythm as the heartbeat of creativity. A raven's head with two beaks—one open, one closed—adds a dreamlike element, reflecting duality and mysticism.

Nitram Charcoal Powder played a crucial role in the creation of the work. The extra fine and homogeneous powder allowed for precise detail, a perfect blend with intense black tones. Its yield and quality were essential to photo-realistically capture the brilliance of the drum set and the dynamic movements of the drumsticks. With Nitram Charcoal, Stefan Wepfer was able to bring the rhythmic energy of his subject to life with impressive precision.

To watch a video of Stefan Wepfer working with Nitram Powdered Charcoal please visit: **https://nitramcharcoal.com/stefan-wepfer** or **scan the QR code.**

Swiss artist Stefan Wepfer blends technical precision with deep introspection. After studying in Basel, his career took him from Switzerland to Germany before returning to Winterthur, where he now lives and works. His charcoal and soot drawings merge photorealism with surreal elements, exploring the boundary between reality and dream. Often inspired by his own photographs, Wepfer's art invites viewers to question the visible. His work reflects global influences and years of meditation practice. **www.stefanwepfer.com** **Instagram: @stefanwepfer.art**

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www.nitramcharcoal.com

Contents

Regulars

5 **SKETCHBOOK** Quick tips, ideas and inspiration. Plus, this month's exhibitions

12 **PRIZE DRAW** Win £1,000 towards an art retreat

14 **WE PRESENT** British Art Club member Joan Crawford

22 **HOW I MAKE IT WORK** with acrylic artist Raman Uppal

79 **YOU TELL US** Write in and tell us what inspires you

82 **PICTURE THIS** Still life artist Rachel Dowd tells us why her painting is special to her

Inspiration

16 **IN THE STUDIO** with oil artist Taylor Tynes

24 **HOW I PAINT** Canadian painter Susannah Bleasby on abstract art and nature

30 **THE BIG INTERVIEW** Cover artist Sarah Fosse shares how she creates her energetic cityscapes

36 **EXHIBITION** A new British Museum exhibition showcases Japanese artist Hiroshige's work

42 **RETROSPECTIVE** Victor Hugo, famed novelist and prolific artist, is the focus of a new Royal Academy exhibition

STEP-BY-STEP STUDIO

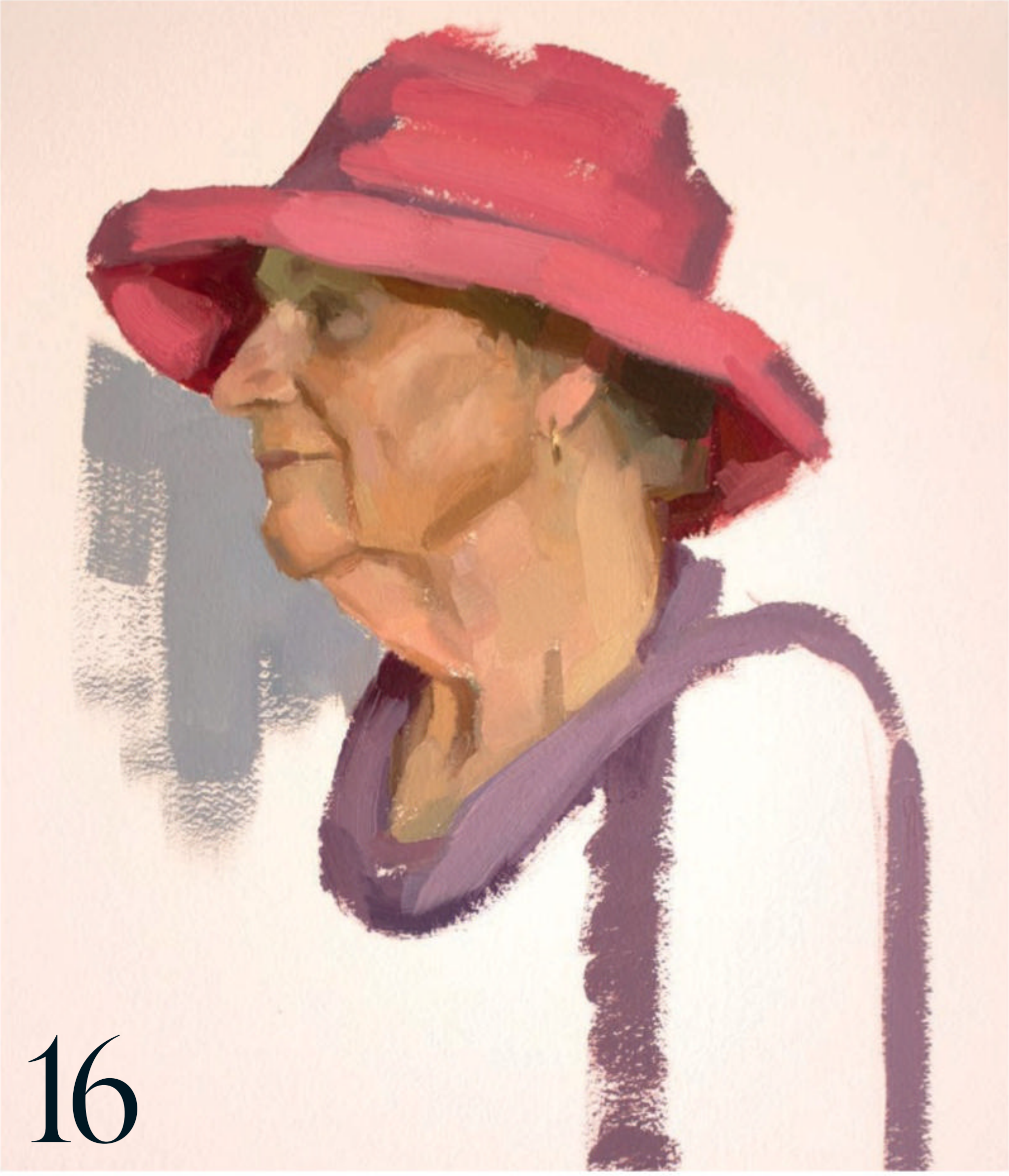
50 **SERIES** In the final instalment of our series with Alvaro Castagnet, he talks about edges

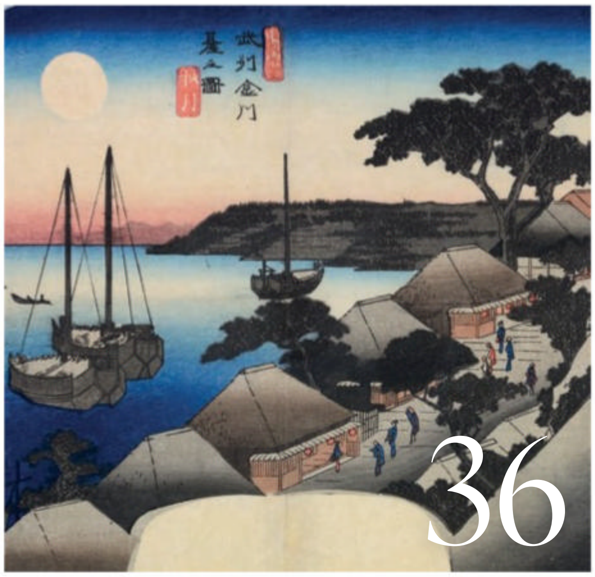
56 **ANIMAL** Kasha Lunt shows you how she draws a majestic horse in coloured pencil

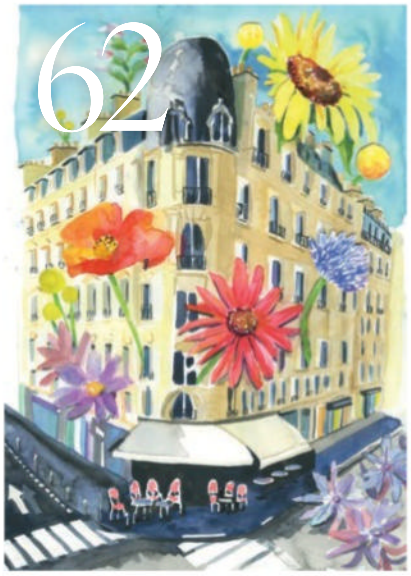
62 **CITYSCAPE** Jessie Weiner paints Parisian architecture in watercolour

68 **COLOURED PENCIL** Caroline Strong demonstrates how she captures a butterfly on a wildflower

72 **EXTRACT** David Bellamy explores gouache in an exclusive book extract







Want to mix up your mediums?

In this action-packed issue, we've got a final, practical watercolour story, by the legendary Alvaro Castagnet who demonstrates the importance of edges in your paintings. Then, Jessie Kanelos Wiener shows you how she paints an iconic Parisian scene in a similar method. A fan of coloured pencil? We have two artists, working in very different styles, but with the same subject. Then, watercolour expert David Bellamy shares his secrets to exploring in gouache, which he makes look so much fun. Give it a go. Playing around with different instruments and methods is so enjoyable.

But if you're a fan of acrylic, we've got Susannah Bleasby in the How I Paint slot showcasing her fabulous florals and landscapes along with this month's cover star, Sarah Fosse, whose cityscapes are simply showstopping. I hope you are all are invigorated and uplifted by this fantastic work.

What's truly inspiring is knowing that art has been doing just that, inspiring all, for decades. The author Victor Hugo, the wordsmith behind *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, was an acclaimed writer but a lesser-known artist who, nevertheless, created a prolific amount of work in his day. We cover an exclusive show on this polymath by the Royal Academy.

Then, renowned Japanese ukiyo-e artist Utagawa Hiroshige's finest work is on display at the British Museum, a core display bolstered by key national and international loans, and important works from the museum. Both are exciting exhibitions to make your summer interesting.

Niki Browes Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER BY SARAH FOSSE

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INTRODUCING

TAYLOR TYNES

An oil painter based in Western North Carolina, Taylor studied at the Hein Atelier in Utah. She has since been exhibiting all over the world. Taylor draws influence from her day-to-day life and is interested in continually exploring the relationship between representational art and abstract design.

STEVE PYATT

Steve's passion for art began at school where he achieved a distinction in advanced GNVQ Art and Design. He is delighted to now combine this enthusiasm for art with his marketing knowledge, which uniquely positions him to help businesses run effective advertising campaigns.

SARAH FOSSE

Sarah is a professional artist who has been painting from her London-based studio for over 12 years. With a kaleidoscope of colour, her style captures the dynamic energy of the urban landscape. She is represented by galleries across the UK and exhibits in Europe, America and Asia.

RAMAN UPPAL

Raman is a contemporary artist living and working in London. After gaining a master's in mechanical engineering, he brought his focus back to his creative work, with many of his ideas being influenced by his education. He finds the most interest in abstract and figurative work.

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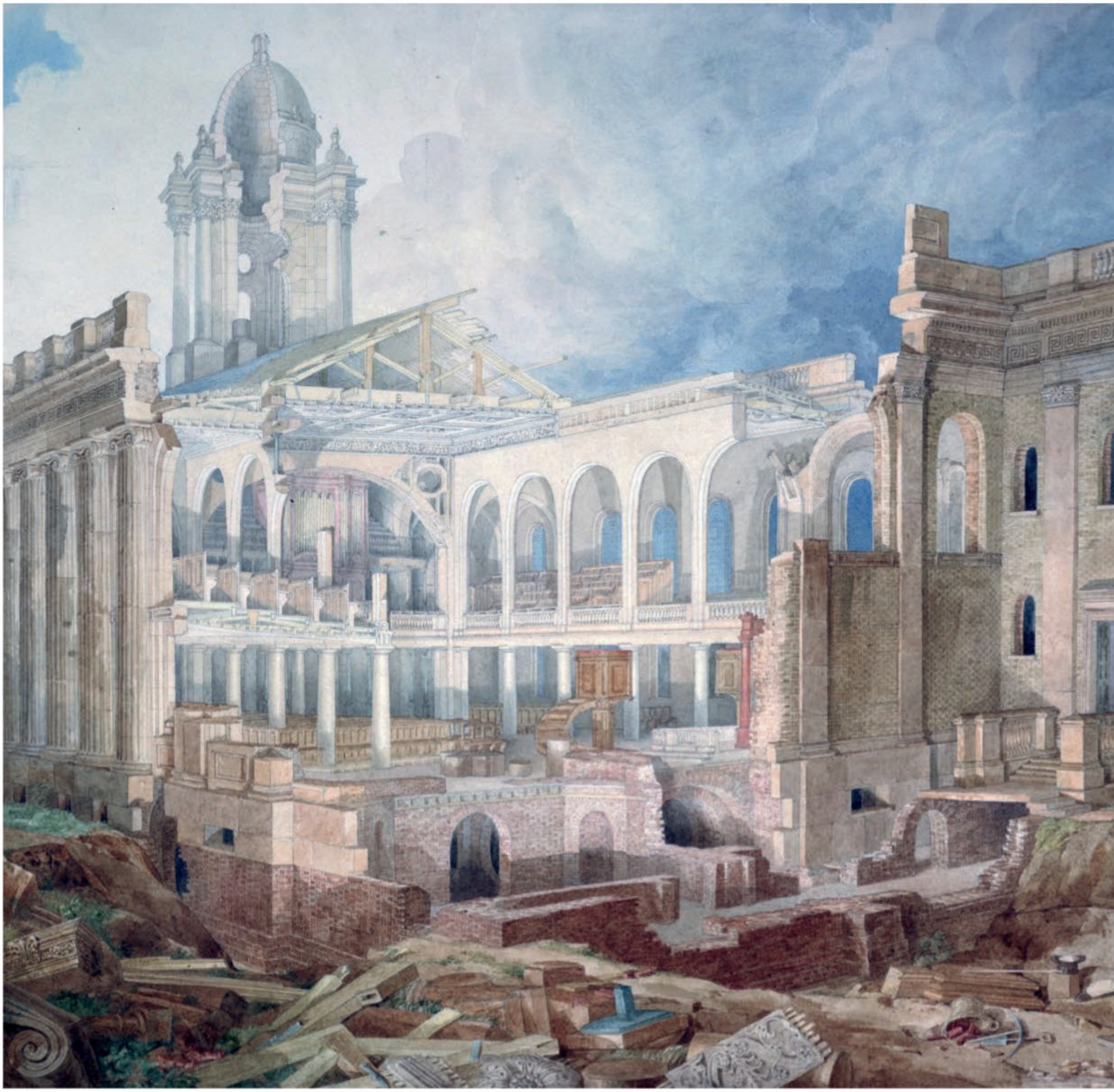
Sketchbook

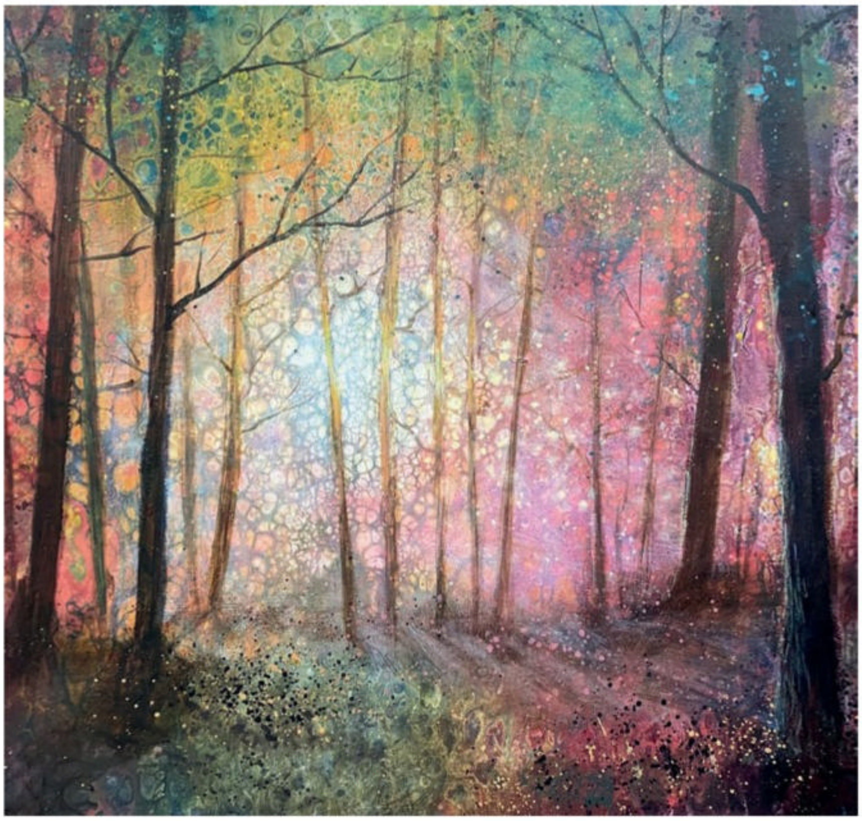
TIPS • ADVICE • EXHIBITIONS • NEWS • REVIEWS

EDITED BY RAMSHA VISTRO



JOSEPH MICHAEL GANDY, CUT-AWAY PERSPECTIVE SHOWING SOANE'S CHURCH OF HOLY TRINITY, MARYLEBONE, C.1806-19, SM 15/4/6, ©SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM, LONDON

Editor's pick... Many of the country's most iconic buildings were constructed during the 18th and 19th centuries, including the iconic Compton Verney itself. Drawn from the collection of pioneering architect Sir John Soane, *Towering Dreams: Extraordinary Architectural Drawings* explores how draughtsmen of those centuries understood the world around them and the ideas and cultures that inspired them. On until 31 August 2025. *comptonverney.org.uk* □



PEACEFUL LIGHT BY CATHRYN JEFF

Don't miss...

Oxfordshire Artweeks in Charlbury, where 15 artists exhibit at 10 venues across the town. Discover a rich mix of painting, textiles, jewellery, ceramics and sculpture in inspiring spaces; from gardens and cottages to historic St Mary's Church. It's a great opportunity to meet artists, explore working studios and gather creative ideas. Pick up a trail map and make a day of it. From 17-26 May 2025, (including the Bank Holiday Monday).
artweeks.org

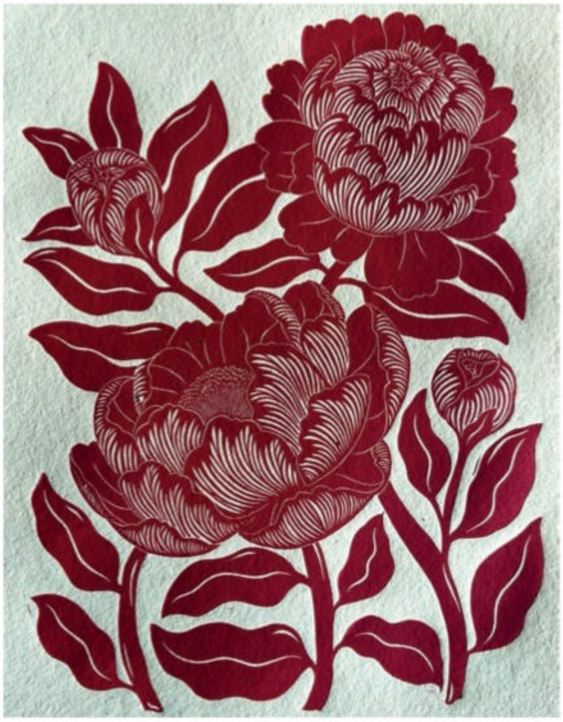
BOOK OF THE MONTH

DRAW YOUR ADVENTURES

Samantha Dion Baker

A beautifully illustrated and practical guide to documenting life through art, *Draw Your Adventures* encourages readers to celebrate everyday moments and global travels alike. With creative prompts, scavenger hunts and inspiring examples from Baker's own sketchbooks, this book invites both beginners and experienced artists to see the world afresh.
Watson-Guptill, £14.99

DRAW YOUR ADVENTURES
Making Art to Celebrate Everyday Experiences and Travels Near and Far
Samantha Dion Baker



GRACE GILLESPIE

GREAT PRINT 10

This exhibition at Rheged Arts Centre, celebrating a decade of printmaking excellence, showcases over 1,000 original works by 59 UK artists. Visitors can explore diverse printmaking techniques, including screenprint, etching and letterpress, while viewing pieces by Cumbrian artists like Sarah Cemmick and Sue Rowland. Special highlights include artist-led workshops and a focus on the art of letterpress. *Great Print 10* is open daily from 10am to 5:30pm until 29 June 2025, with free entry. No booking required.
rheged.com/gallery

Join us online!

These pages are packed with artistic inspiration, but if you're after more, explore the fabulous *Artists & Illustrators* website. A go-to resource for artists across all disciplines, it offers a wealth of practical guides, exciting competitions and engaging interviews. Discover even more creative resources and inspiration. See you there.
artistsandillustrators.co.uk

THE DIARY

Open calls, prizes and artist opportunities

23 MAY

Submit your work for the Gilchrist-Fisher Award, open to artists under 30 working in any media and exploring landscape. First prize: £6,000. Free.
gilchristfisheraward.co.uk

23 MAY

Enter the Lumen Prize and win up to $12,000 for digital art that engages with technology. Categories include Still Image, AI, XR and more. Open to all.
lumenprize.com

11 JUNE

Textile artists, apply to the Fine Art Textiles Award for a chance to exhibit at the Festival of Quilts and win from a £9,000 prize pot. Entry from £22.
thefestivalofquilts.co.uk

22 JUNE

Scotland-based artists working in water-based mediums can enter the RSA William Littlejohn Award for £2,000 and an RSA exhibition. No entry fee.
royalscottishacademy.org

The Telegraph

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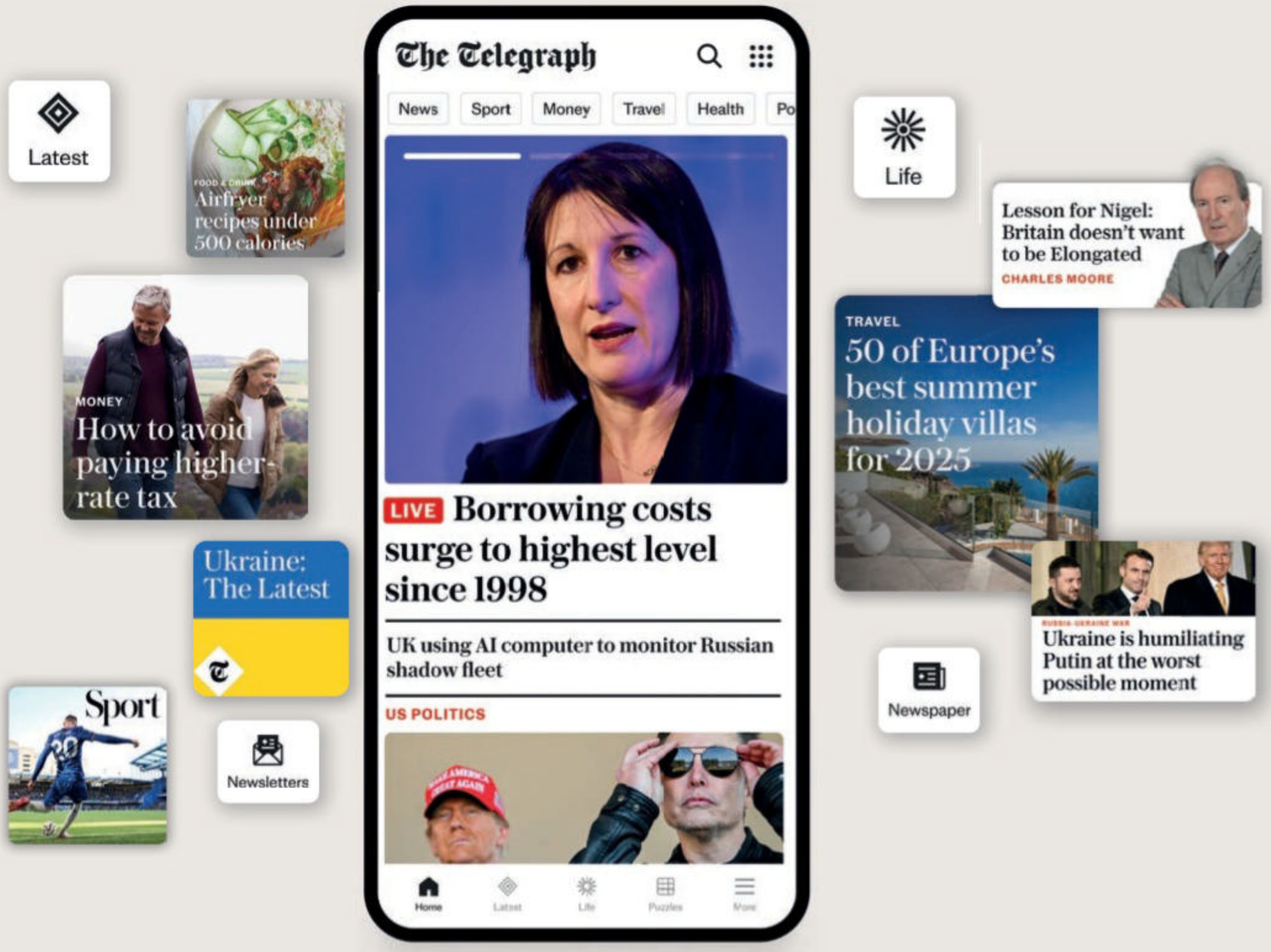

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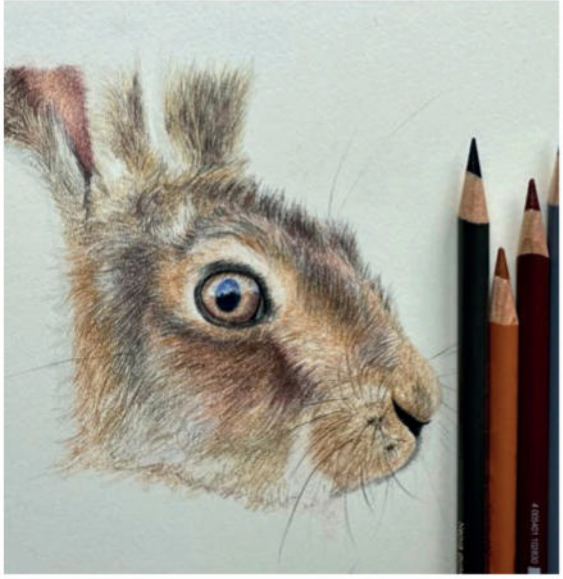
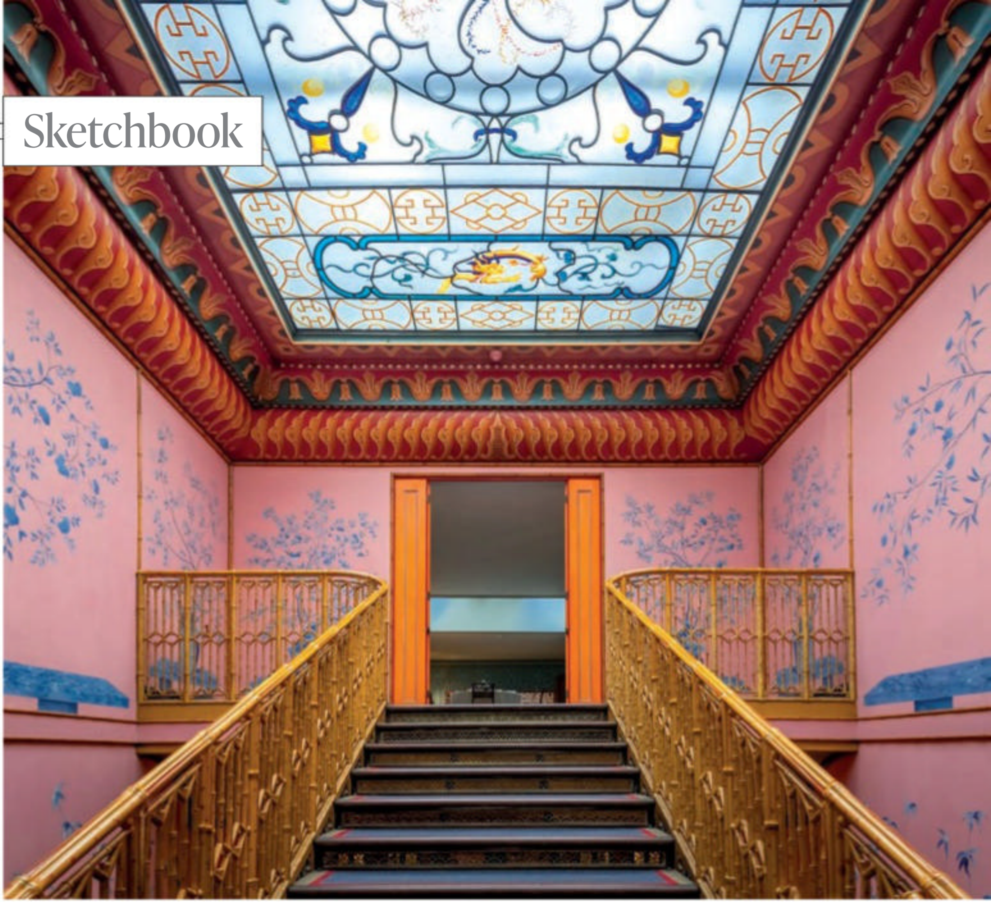


COURTESY OF BONNY SNOWDON

COLOURED PENCIL WEEK

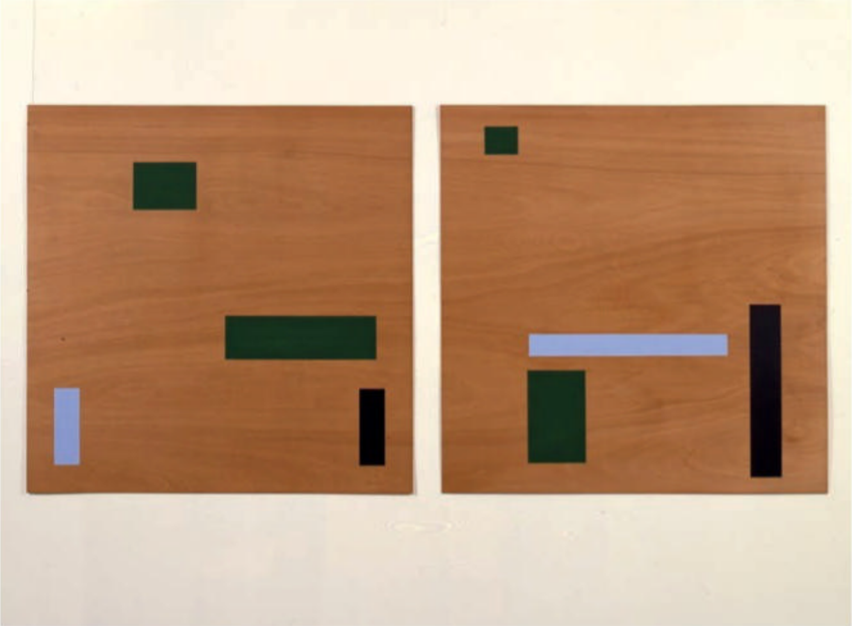
Experience a joyful, wildlife-themed celebration of colour, creativity and community. Hosted by coloured pencil expert Bonny Snowdon, this online event runs from 9 to 16 May 2025 and is packed with live workshops, artist Q&As and inspiring tutorials, all for just £10! Whether you're brand new to coloured pencils or already in love with the medium, you'll learn how to bring animals to life on paper, connect with a global community of artists and rekindle your creative spark. It's all virtual (so yes, pyjamas are totally acceptable). ***bonnysnowdonacademy.com***



PEACH BLOSSOM, ROYAL PAVILION INTERIORS

COLOUR

This is an immersive exhibition exploring the emotional power of colour. Artists can take inspiration from bold Regency interiors, sensory installations and curated interventions that show how pigment and palette shape perception. From peach blossom softness to deep red drama, each space is a lesson in atmosphere. With workshops, talks and creative activities throughout, this is a must-visit for anyone curious about colour's expressive potential. On at the Royal Pavilion until 19 October 2025. ***brightonmuseums.org.uk***



SYMMETRISCHE-ASSYMETRISCHE REEKS OP PANEEL GROEN (CURSIEF), 1988

Explore...

The exhibition + *Days* + *Nights* which brings together works by Abraham Kritzman and the late Philippe Van Snick. Exhibiting together for the first time, both artists explore time, space and perception through distinct visual languages; Kritzman with layered, multidisciplinary narratives, and Van Snick with his poetic, systematic abstraction. Featuring new commissions and key historical works, the show runs until 8 June 2025 at Exmouth Market and is part of London Gallery Weekend 2025. ***elizabethxibauer.com***

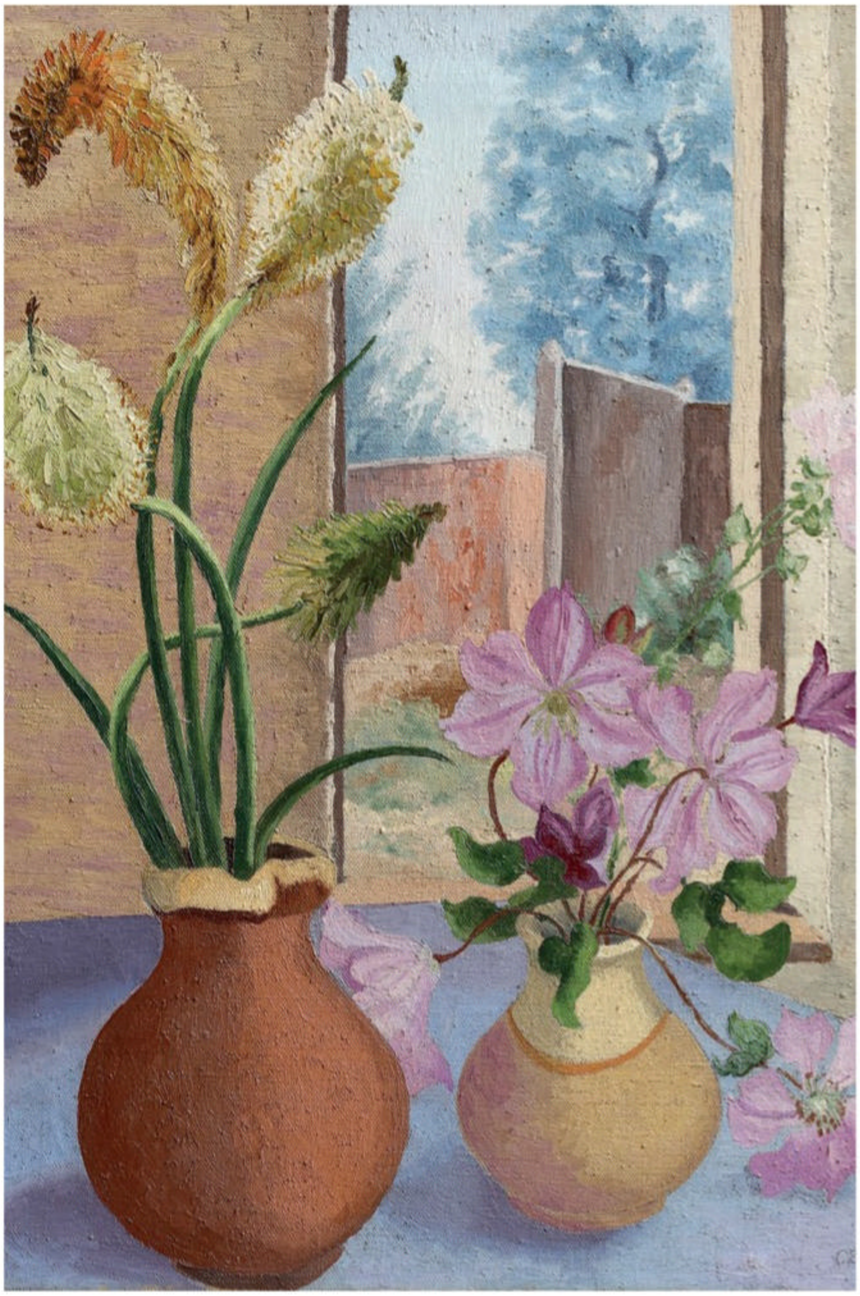
BE INSPIRED...

by *Helaine Blumenfeld: Tree of Life* at Gainsborough's House. Explore a powerful meeting of art and nature which features striking bronze sculptures in the garden; its first outdoor show in over 10 years. Blumenfeld's work reflects the spirit of Gainsborough's art: fluid, dreamlike and rooted in nature. Her sculptures blend human and plant forms, expressing movement, unity and hope. Don't miss this rare chance to see one of Britain's leading sculptors in a historic setting. On until 19 October 2025. ***gainsborough.org***

HIGNELL BLUMENFELD

Exhibitions

THE BEST ART SHOWS TO VISIT FROM THIS MONTH ONWARDS

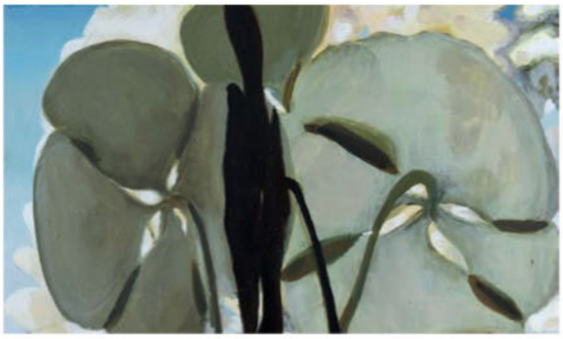


CEDRIC MORRIS (1889-1982), SUMMER GARDEN FLOWERS, 1944, PHILIP MOULD & COMPANY (PREVIOUSLY OWNED BY BETH CHATTO OBE VMH)

GARDEN TO CANVAS: CEDRIC MORRIS & BENTON END

20 May to 18 June 2025

This exhibition brings together Cedric Morris' vibrant flower paintings that inspired the restoration of his historic Suffolk garden. Guest-curated by James Horner, Head Gardener at Benton End, it celebrates the rediscovery of plants once cultivated by Morris and now reintroduced into the garden. The exhibition offers a dialogue between art and horticulture, documenting the garden's renewal over the past two years. ***Philip Mould & Company, 16 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5LU. philipmould.com***

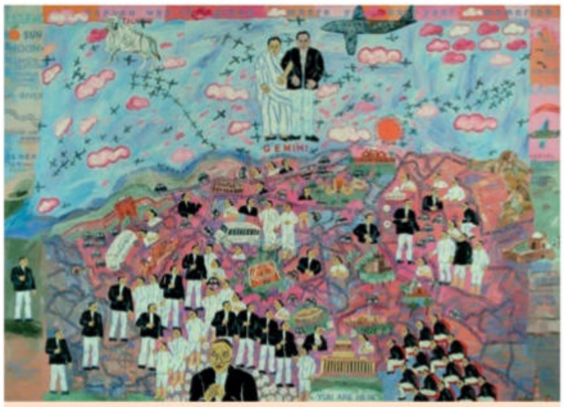


SUN SCORCH, KATHERINE JONES, 24.6X32.4X3CM, OIL AND ACRYLIC ON WOOD PANEL, 2024

FINE LADIES AND GENTLE MEN

Until 19 October 2025

This is the first solo museum show for Brixton-based printmaker and artist Katherine Jones, RA. Featuring a range of prints and small panel paintings, this exhibition draws inspiration from Thomas Gainsborough's iconic 18th-century portraits, blending floral motifs with reflections on nature's perpetual renewal. A highlight is a four-panel print inspired by the 400-year-old mulberry tree in the Gainsborough House garden, exploring themes of style, transformation and the cyclical nature of life. ***Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 2EU. gainsborough.org***



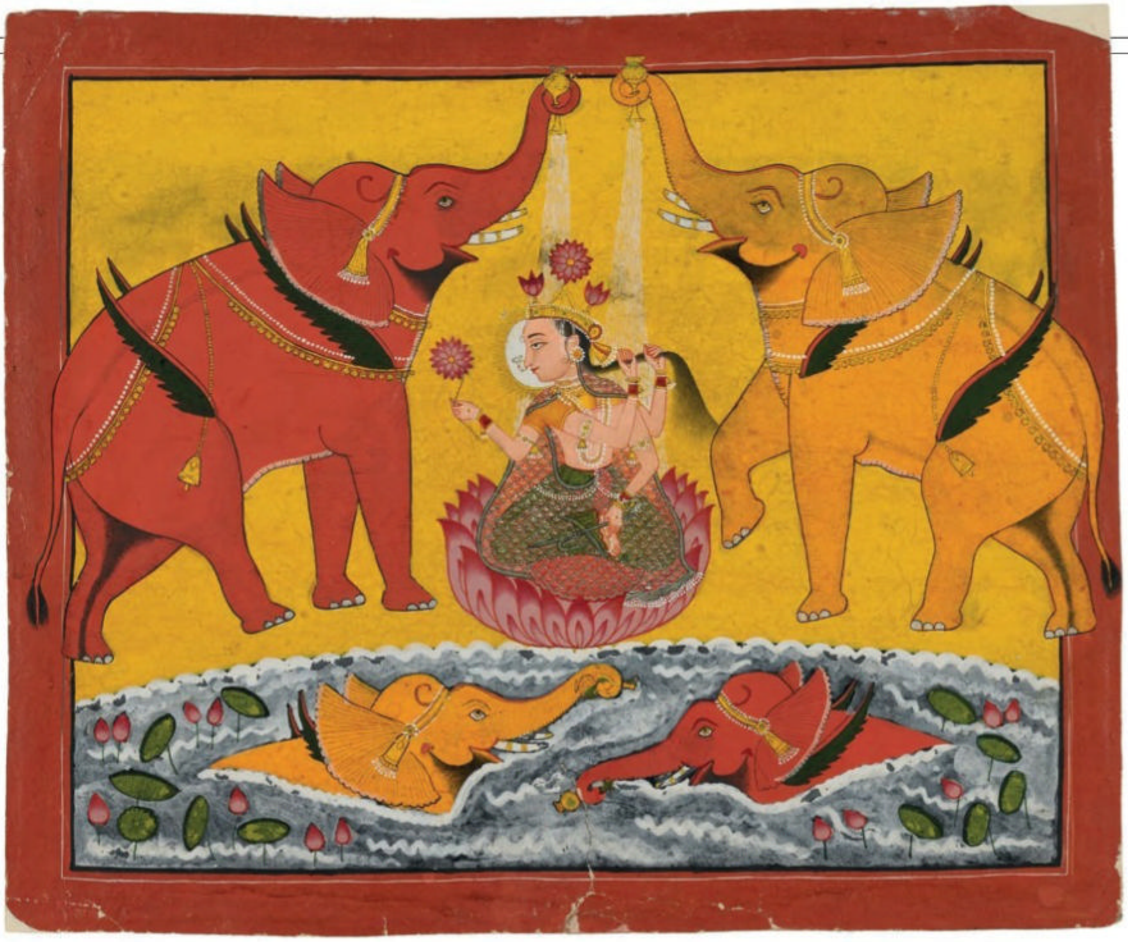
ARPITA SINGH, MY LOLLIPOP CITY GEMINI RISING, 2005, VADEHRA ART GALLERY © ARPITA SINGH

REMEMBERING

Until 27 July 2025

This display showcases over six decades of artist Arpita Singh's artistic journey, blending surrealism, figuration and abstraction with Indian court painting narratives. It explores themes of gender, violence and social upheaval through dynamic works, from large-scale oil paintings to intimate watercolours. ***Serpentine North, Kensington Gardens, London, W2 3XA. serpentinegalleries.org***

MICHAEL CRAIG-MARTIN, FOLIO, 2004, © IMAGE COURTESY THE ARTIST AND CRISTEA ROBERTS GALLERY. PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL BROWNE



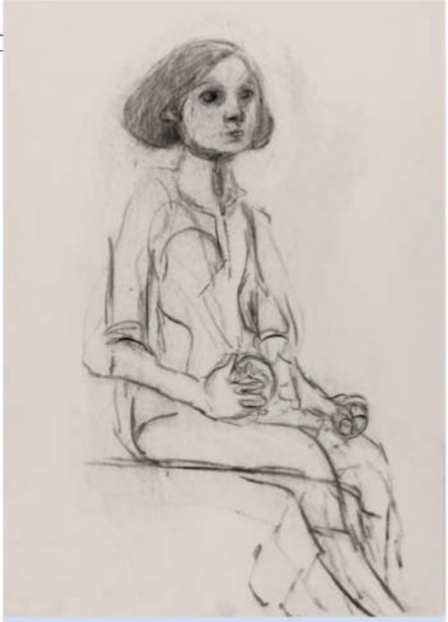
GAJA-LAKSHMI ('ELEPHANT LAKSHMI') GODDESS OF GOOD FORTUNE, ABOUT 1780 © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

ANCIENT INDIA: LIVING TRADITIONS

22 May to 19 October 2025

This exhibition explores the origins of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain sacred art, tracing the transformation of early religious imagery into iconic human forms. With over 180 objects, including sculptures, paintings and manuscripts, it highlights how these ancient faiths shaped India's spiritual and artistic landscape, and their continuing influence today.

The Sainsbury Exhibition Gallery, The British Museum, Great Russell St, London WC1B 3DG. britishmuseum.org/ancientindia



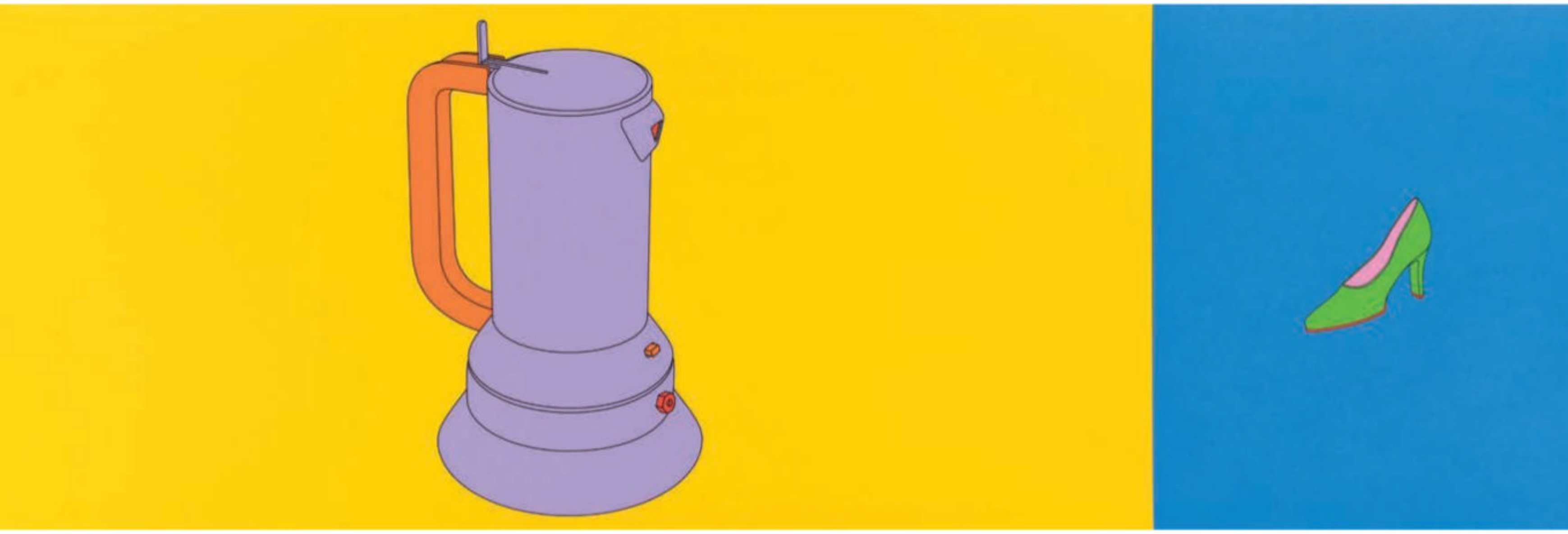
WE ARE OUT HERE LIVING UNDER THE SUN (DRAWING II) 50X35CM, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 2025

AN UNBIDDEN QUEST

Until 8 June 2025

Hannah Murgatroyd's first solo exhibition in London explores the uncharted journey of painting and motherhood. The works focus on women; figures shaped by history and cycles of creation, loss and renewal. Drawing from her childhood landscape of Dartmoor, Murgatroyd's emotional, dream-like paintings blend abstraction and figuration, examining themes of time, legacy and resistance.

Blackbird Rook, The Florence Trust, Cloudesley Square, London N1 0HN. blackbirdrook.com



EVERYDAY OBJECTS

20 May to 13 September 2025

This vibrant exhibition by renowned artist Michael Craig-Martin features 23 prints. The show explores the world of classic and contemporary design through the lens of ordinary items – headphones, lightbulbs, trainers and more – using Craig-Martin's signature bold colours and precise line work. The exhibition challenges viewers to reconsider the objects that shape our world, highlighting their transitory nature and the nostalgia they evoke. Craig-Martin's work, which often pairs old and new technologies, will be displayed alongside objects from the museum's collection, providing a unique conversation between art and history.

Petersfield Museum and Art Gallery, Hampshire, GU31 4AA. petersfieldmuseum.co.uk

PRIZE DRAW

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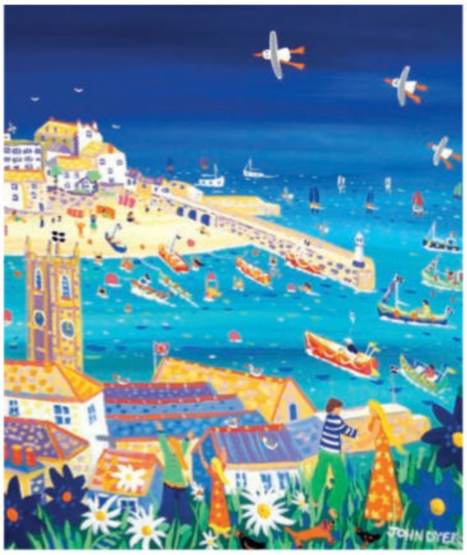
ST IVES SCHOOL OF PAINTING

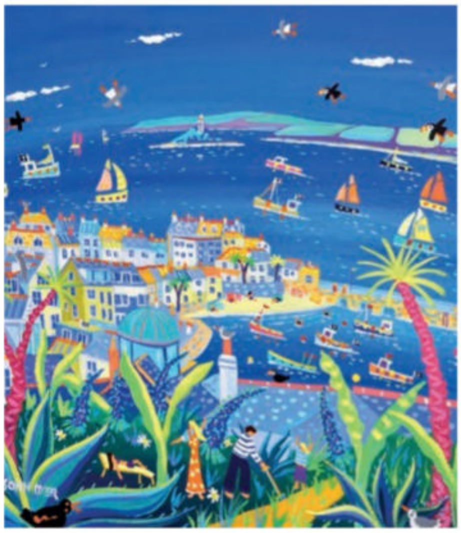
St Ives School of Painting, established in 1938, provides quality, contemporary art tuition from their unique location above Porthmeor beach in St Ives, Cornwall. They are offering an exclusive competition prize, giving you the chance to join contemporary artist, John Dyer, on his upcoming course 'Painting St Ives: Your Narrative' this September.

Combining the dynamic energy of outdoor exploration with focused studio practice, set against the stunning backdrop of St Ives, you will learn through observational studies, experimental approaches and guided practice. Each student will be encouraged to express their unique artistic voice to create vibrant paintings, incorporating their emotions, observations and newly developed techniques.

Based in the historic Porthmeor Studios, all materials are provided on this brand-new three-day course, which is perfect for those seeking a freer, more expressive approach to painting.

St Ives School of Painting works with a team of over 30 contemporary artists. With more than 100 courses to choose from, there is something for everyone; whether you're a complete beginner or a practiced artist. You can even take a bit of St Ives magic into your home, through their easy to access online art classes. To find out more visit: ***schoolofpainting.co.uk*** ◻





© JOHN DYER

The prize

Two winners, chosen at random, will each receive a place on the studio art course with contemporary artist John Dyer, valued at £425 each. One runner-up will receive a £150 voucher to use towards an online art course at the St Ives School of Painting.

HOW TO ENTER

Submit your entry online by noon on 15 July 2025 at **artistsandillustrators.co.uk/competitions**

TERMS & CONDITIONS

UK residents only (18+). Subscribe to *Artists & Illustrators* newsletter to enter (existing subscribers also eligible). The prize excludes travel and/or accommodation. If the winning entrant is unavailable to attend the studio course during the dates the course is running, the prize can be redeemed against online courses. No cash alternatives are available. The prize is non-transferable. Promoter: The Chelsea Magazine Company Ltd.

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This month's spotlight on a British Art Club member

We present...

JOAN CRAWFORD

This abstract artist redefines nature with insight and thoughtful expression

Joan Crawford's abstract paintings have energy, colour and an unspoken narrative. Known for her textured, layered compositions, she seamlessly merges her fascination with nature and her own vivid emotional responses to it. What sets her work apart is the dynamic tension between intuition and control; a balance that she has honed throughout her unconventional art journey.

Joan's path to painting wasn't linear. With no formal artistic training, she discovered her passion for art later in life. "My career had nothing to do with art, but after completing a History of Art course, I realised how much I enjoyed it," she says. Her early experience with flower arrangements for her daughter's wedding laid a strong foundation in colour theory and balance; skills she would later apply to her paintings. A mix of local workshops, painting holidays and online classes allowed her to refine her technique, giving her the confidence to experiment freely with shapes and materials.

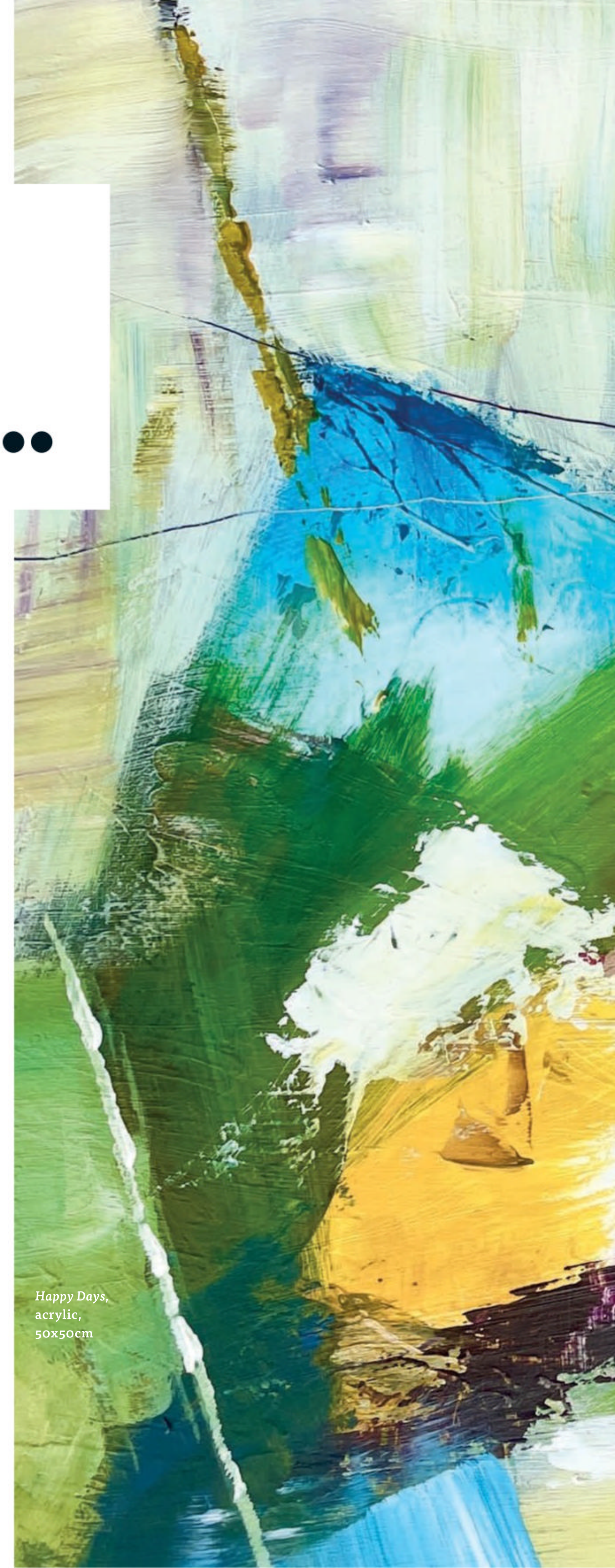
Originally a watercolour painter, Joan switched to acrylics, finding the medium's layering ability better suited to her need for expressive freedom. "I wasn't able to express my joy and connection to the landscape as fully with watercolours," she notes. This shift, along with a love for being outdoors, particularly by the sea, allowed her to channel the natural world's raw beauty into her work.

Her paintings don't simply replicate what she sees; they channel her emotional response to her surroundings. Joan is drawn to the power of colour as a communicator of mood. "For me, happiness is a bright hue, anxiety is dark," she says, describing her instinctive use of colour as essential to her process.

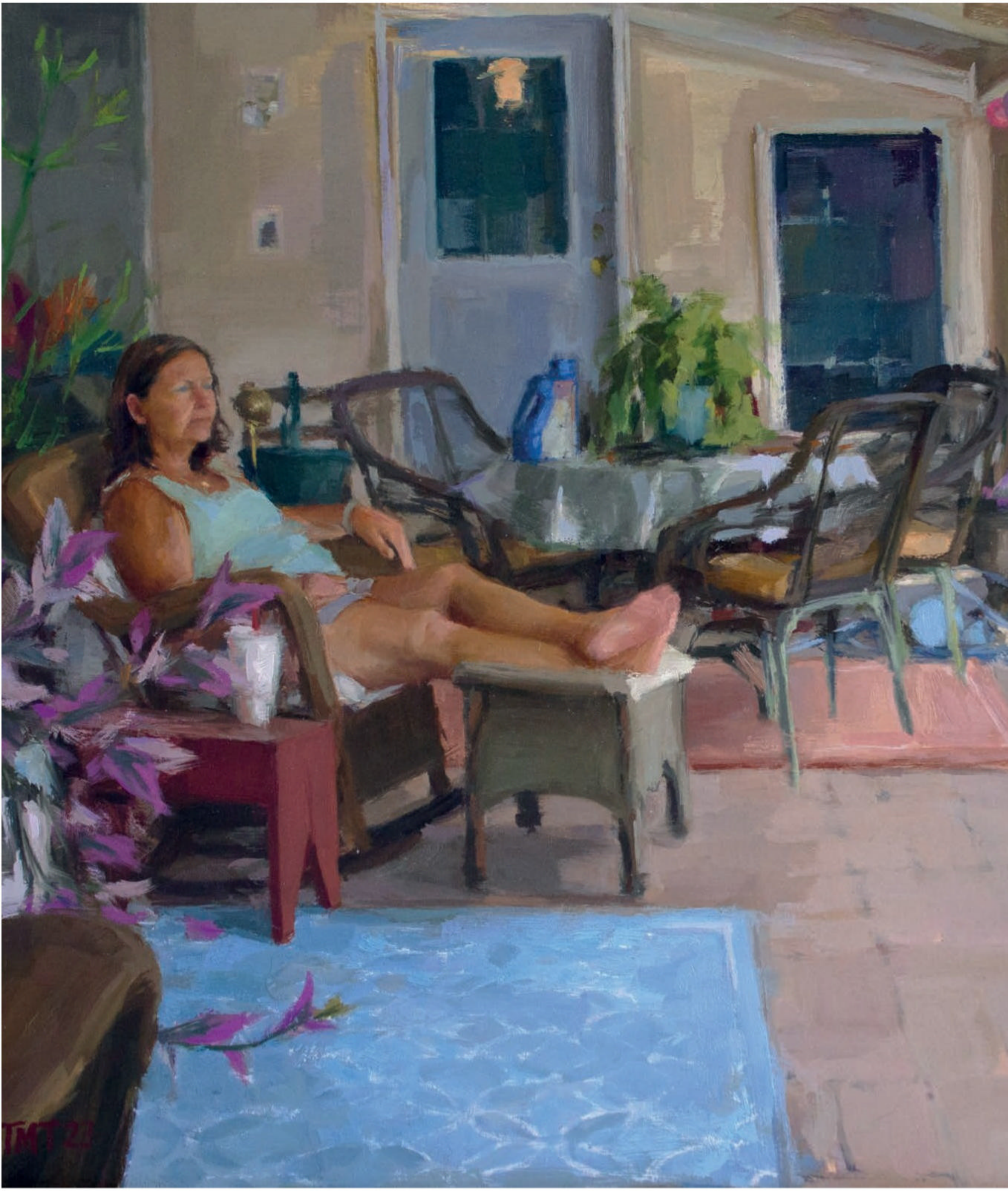
While her approach begins with a loose, intuitive response to her palette, Joan brings sharp analytical thinking into play when refining her pieces. "When I no longer trip over a detail and feel the message has been conveyed, that's when it's finished," she explains.

The artist's work invites the viewer to look deeper, think critically and perhaps, reflect. "I want them to feel a little curious, challenged and hopefully soothed by the experience," Joan concludes.

britishartclub.co.uk/profile/joancrawford □



Happy Days, acrylic, 50x50cm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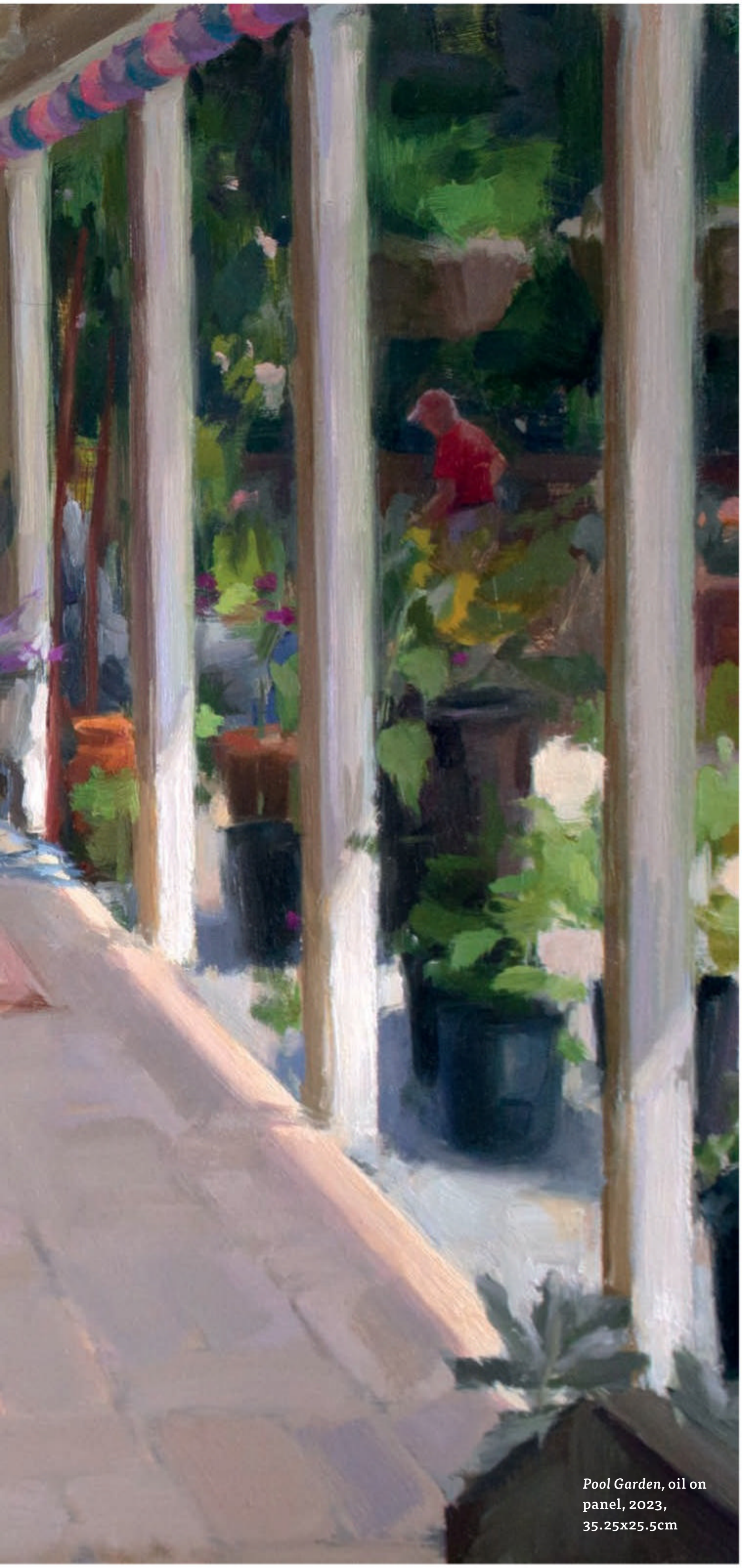


Pool Garden, oil on panel, 2023, 35.25x25.5cm

Taylor Tynes

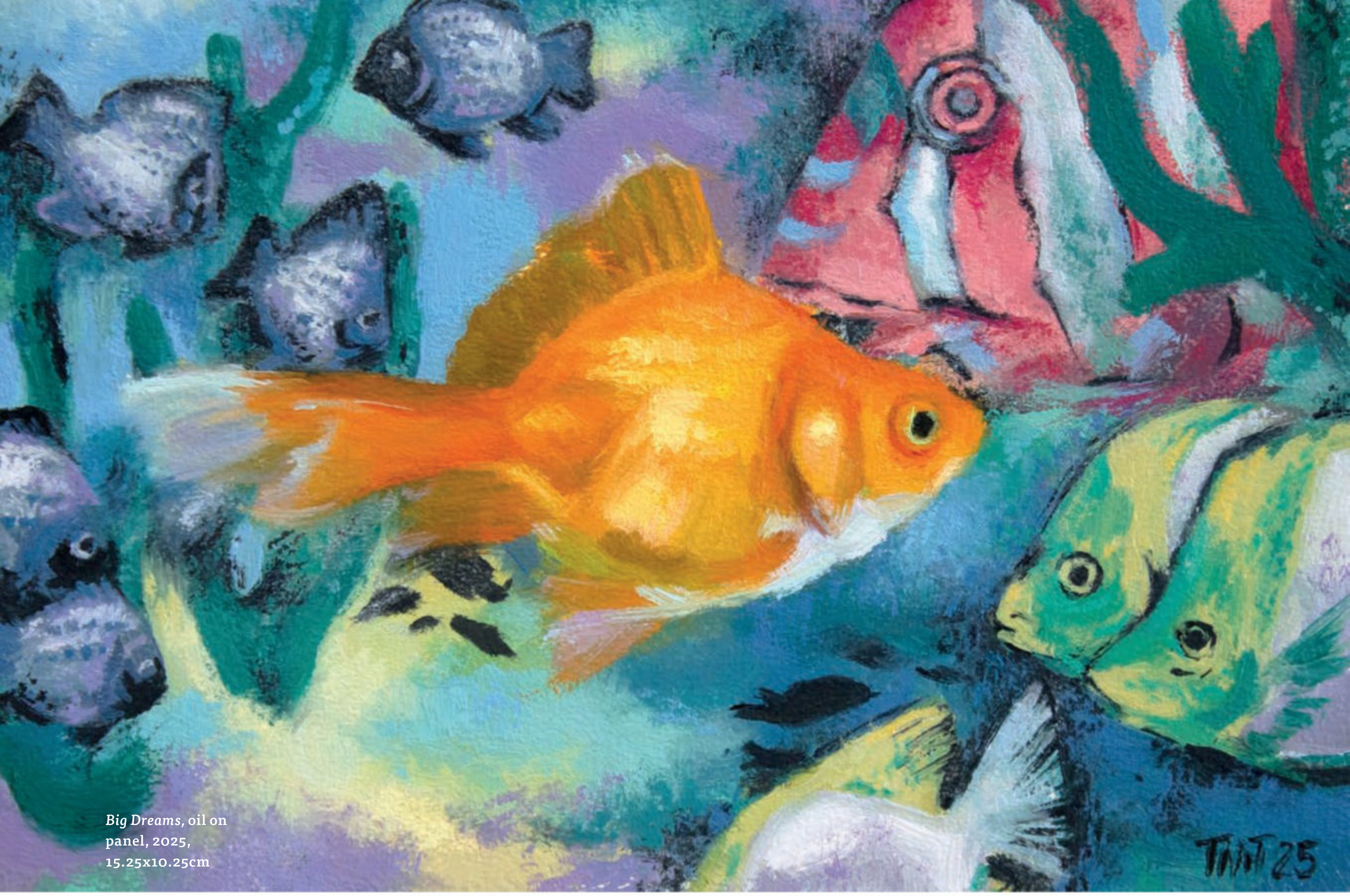
Focused on tradition and technique, this artist brings memories to life through vibrant oil paintings, finds *Sara Mumtaz*

In the rolling hills of Western North Carolina, Taylor Tynes, an oil painter whose work explores the balance between representational art and abstract design, has established a space for her creative process. Her journey as an artist has been shaped by a mix of personal history, rigorous training and an unrelenting drive to capture the essence of life through paint.

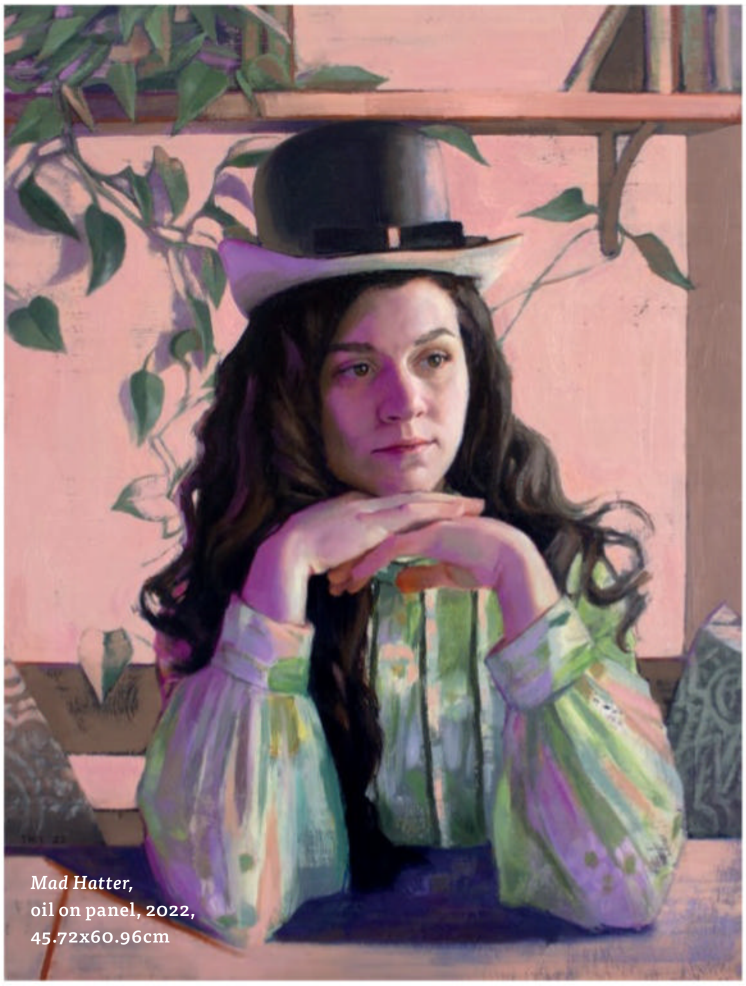
Taylor's connection to art began early. Growing up in South Carolina – surrounded by a family that nurtured her creative spirit – she was absorbed in a world of craft and colour. "I was always the messy kid," she says, smiling. "Drawing, painting, cutting, glueing; you name it, I was doing it." Her mother, an art teacher, played an essential role in nurturing this creativeness. "She really provided the tools and space for me to create," says Taylor. "I think that's one of the biggest gifts she gave me."

Taylor's academic journey took her to the University of South Carolina, where she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2016. There, her exposure to an array of artistic disciplines helped refine her focus. "I took all kinds of classes: wood shop, encaustic wax painting and art pre-history," she recalls. "It was all fascinating, but it was oil painting that really felt like a fit for me." Although, it was a seemingly chance encounter that set the course for her next step. "I had no idea what an atelier was until a classmate mentioned it," Taylor admits. "You don't know what you don't know! I looked into it and was amazed by the technical skill and quality of work coming out of these schools."

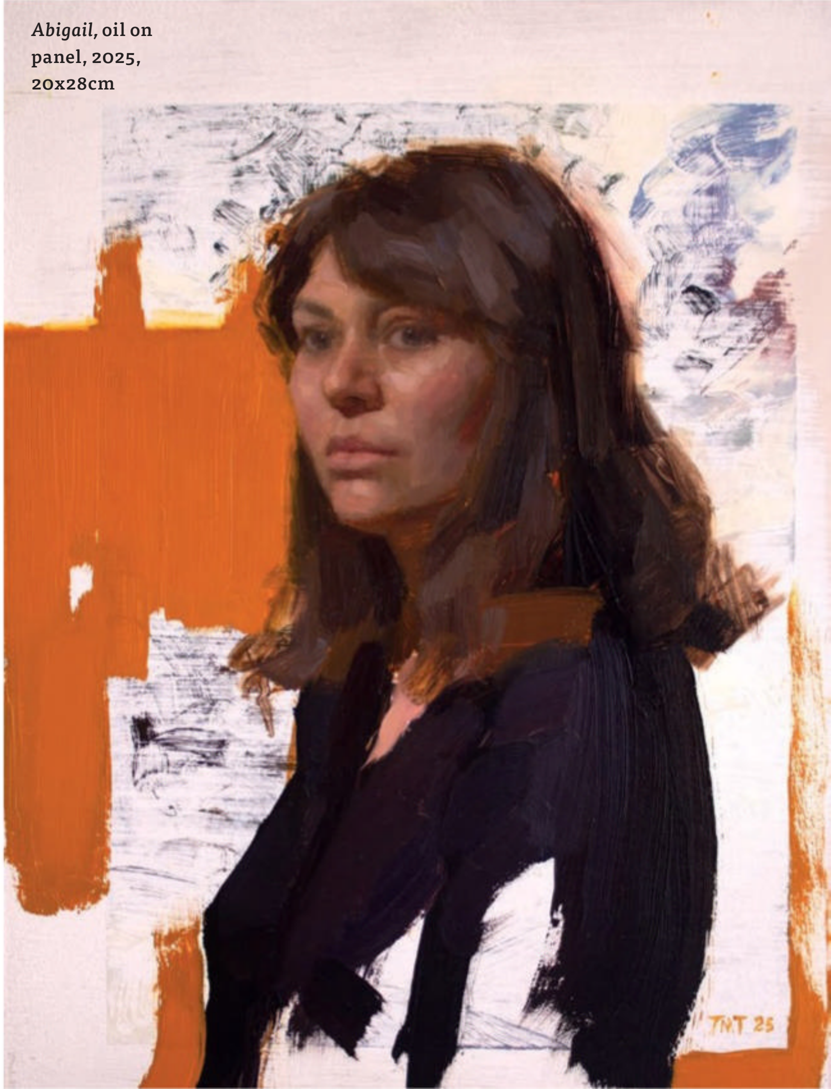
This newfound passion led her to the Hein Atelier of Traditional Art in Salt Lake City, Utah, where she honed her drawing skills and deepened her technical ▶



Big Dreams, oil on panel, 2025, 15.25x10.25cm



Mad Hatter, oil on panel, 2022, 45.72x60.96cm



Abigail, oil on panel, 2025, 20x28cm

expertise. “It was there that I learned what it really, truly means to be a working artist.”

After years in the West, Taylor returned to the Southeastern United States, where she found new inspiration in familiar landscapes. The mountains of North Carolina now inform much of her work, from the delicate blooms in her mother’s garden to the objects passed down from loved ones. “I’ve been spending a lot of time in my grandmother’s and mother’s gardens,” Taylor says. “When I’m reunited with old childhood trinkets and items, I feel a connection to them that I want to express through paint.”

Taylor’s studio, for now, is a spare bedroom filled with boxes, and she’s candid about how it affects her creative flow. “Right now, it’s a chaotic jumble, but it’s cosy,” she laughs. “In an ideal situation, I like the walls to be bare; it helps me focus and prevents me from being overstimulated by other ideas. But it’s amazing what you can create in a space like this when you’re determined.”

While the space is unconventional, it’s filled with life, both human and animal. “My husband, Robert, is my best friend and incredibly supportive of my work. He’s a good sport for enduring many hours of modelling for me,” she laughs. The couple’s two cats, Richard and Pickle, add their own form of chaos to the space. “Richard always waits by the door wondering why he’s shut out most of the time, but fur in paintings isn’t ideal.

She embraces the creative energy her surroundings provide, often working outside when the weather permits. “Sometimes I even grow plants specifically so I can paint them later,” she says, highlighting how her environment shapes her art.

Though her studio is in a state of transition, Taylor’s creative process is anything but haphazard. She speaks enthusiastically about her love for Procreate, an app that helps her sketch out ideas before committing them to canvas. “It’s a great tool,” she says. “I can sketch out an idea quickly and keep track of all my thoughts. Plus, it has a delete key; an artist’s best friend.” Despite the digital aid, she remains firmly rooted in traditional oil painting techniques. “The process is really hands-on,” she says. “I use an obnoxious amount of sticky notes, actually. It’s like a paper factory exploded in my workspace. But they help me stay on track and remember what I want to try next.”

Her creative routine is a good balance between the spontaneous and the methodical. Taylor works on multiple pieces at once, switching between larger, more demanding works and smaller, quicker ones. “I like to have at least three paintings going,” ▶

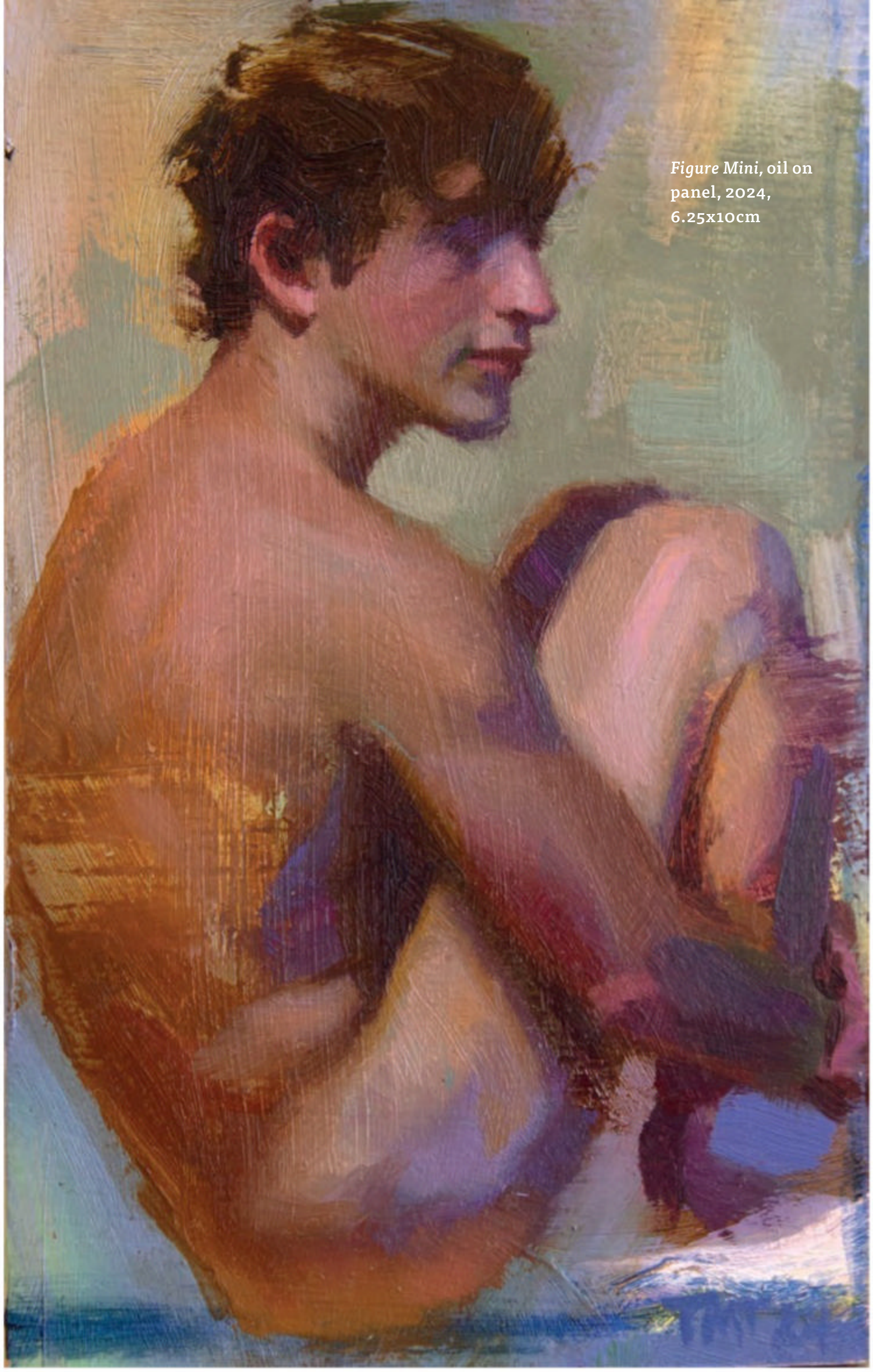


Figure Mini, oil on panel, 2024, 6.25x10cm

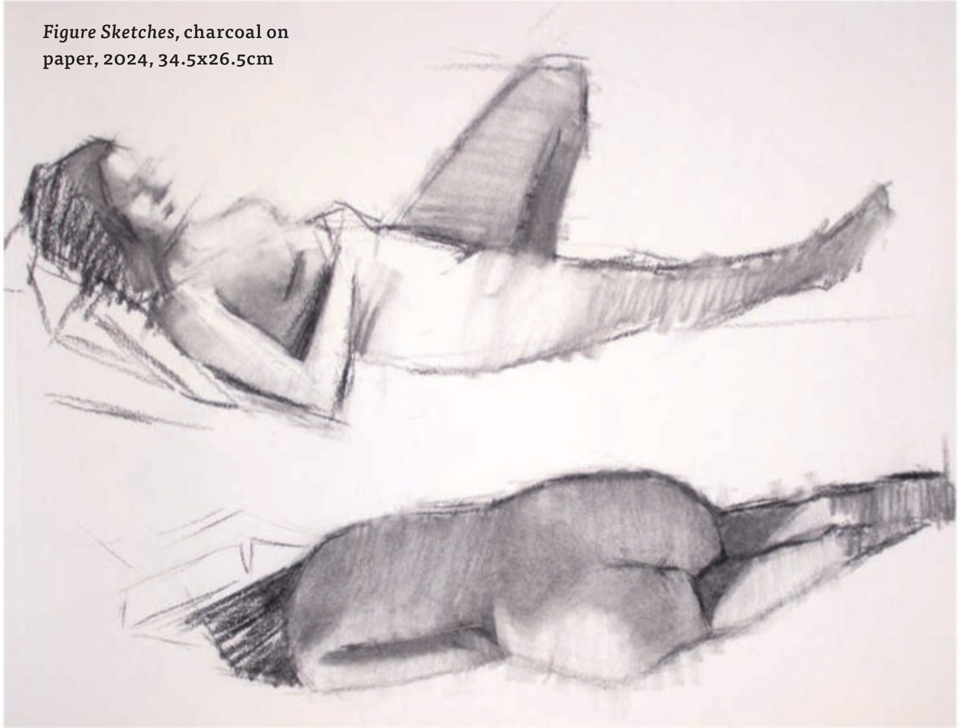
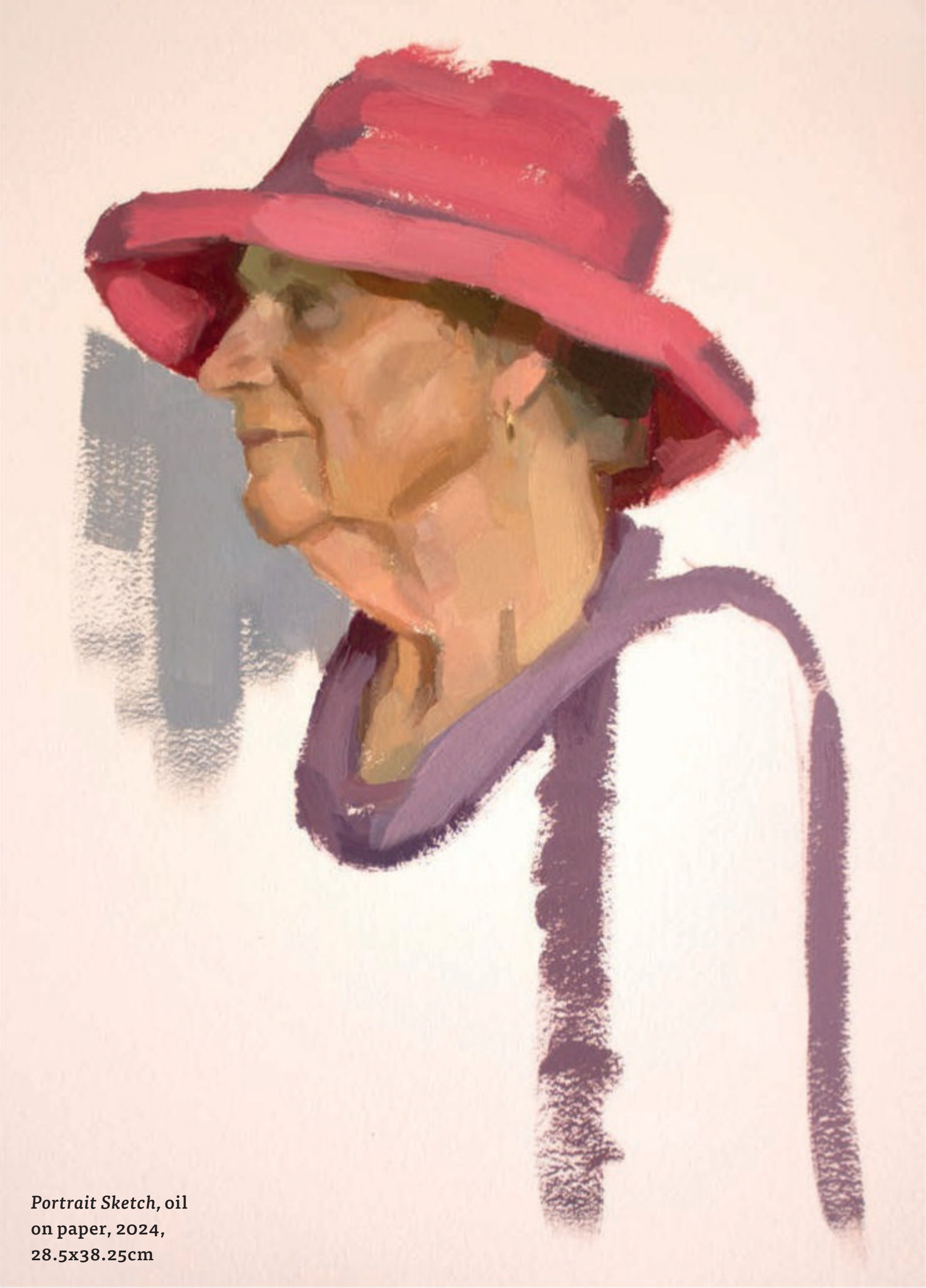
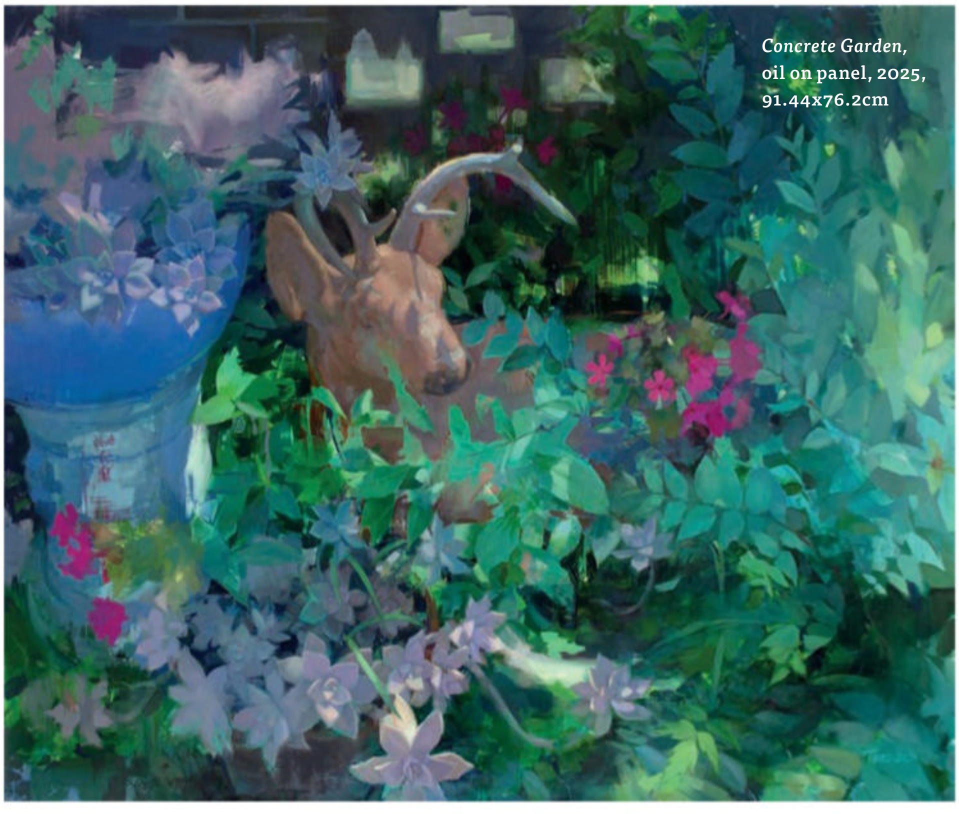


Figure Sketches, charcoal on paper, 2024, 34.5x26.5cm



Portrait Sketch, oil on paper, 2024, 28.5x38.25cm



Concrete Garden, oil on panel, 2025, 91.44x76.2cm

she shares. “It helps keep things fresh. If I’m getting frustrated with one piece, I can shift gears and work on something else.” This fluidity in her approach allows her to maintain a sense of creative freedom while still pushing herself to refine her technique.

In recent years, Taylor’s work has garnered wider recognition, including her Raw Umber Prize win, with *Abigail* (previous page). “I was blown away when I won,” she says. “It was my first time entering, and I almost didn’t; there’s always that voice telling you your work isn’t good enough, but I’m so glad I did.” The prize not only offered exposure but also practical resources, such as access to a reference image library. “It’s such a useful tool for artists,” she explains. “You don’t always have access to models, so having a library of reference images is invaluable.”

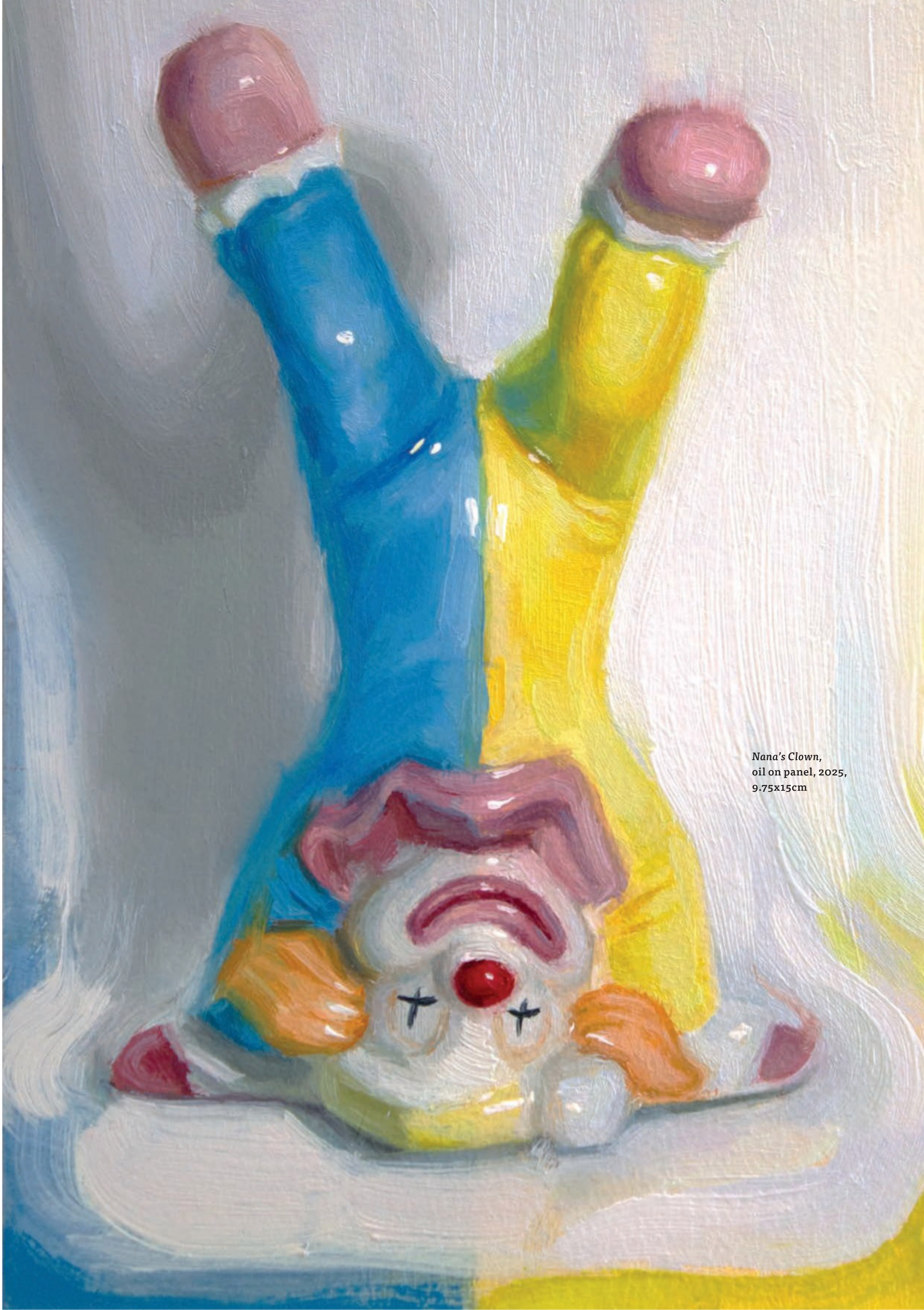
Social media, particularly Instagram, has played an important role in connecting Taylor with a broader audience. She sees the platform as both a blessing and a challenge. “It’s been amazing to connect with other artists and be inspired by their work,” she says. “But it’s also a lot of pressure to keep up. You’re not only an artist; you’re also expected to be a content creator.” Despite this, she views Instagram as a valuable tool for sharing her process and making art more accessible. “It’s nice because it allows people to dip their toes into collecting affordable works from artists they might not otherwise have discovered.”

Throughout her career, Taylor has faced numerous challenges, both in her art and in life. “There’s no way around it,” she says. “Mastering painting takes years; decades, really. And even after all this time, I still feel like I have so much to learn.” Yet, she remains driven by curiosity. “I’ve learned more from my failures than my successes,” she reflects. “It’s all part of the process. You have to be open to failing, because failing is just another form of learning.”

Looking ahead, Taylor is focused on continuing to grow as both an artist and a person. “Art is my passion, but I also make time for the other things that keep me balanced,” she says, referencing her love of cooking, hiking and spending time with family. “You have to take care of yourself in other ways if you want to create your best work.”

As for advice for emerging artists, Taylor keeps it simple: “Paint, paint and paint some more, and be curious, always. There’s no ceiling to what you can learn, but don’t forget to fill your cup in other ways. Life isn’t just about art; it’s about the whole experience.”

taylortynes.com, rawumberstudious.com ◻



Nana's Clown,
oil on panel, 2025,
9.75x15cm

HOW I MAKE IT WORK

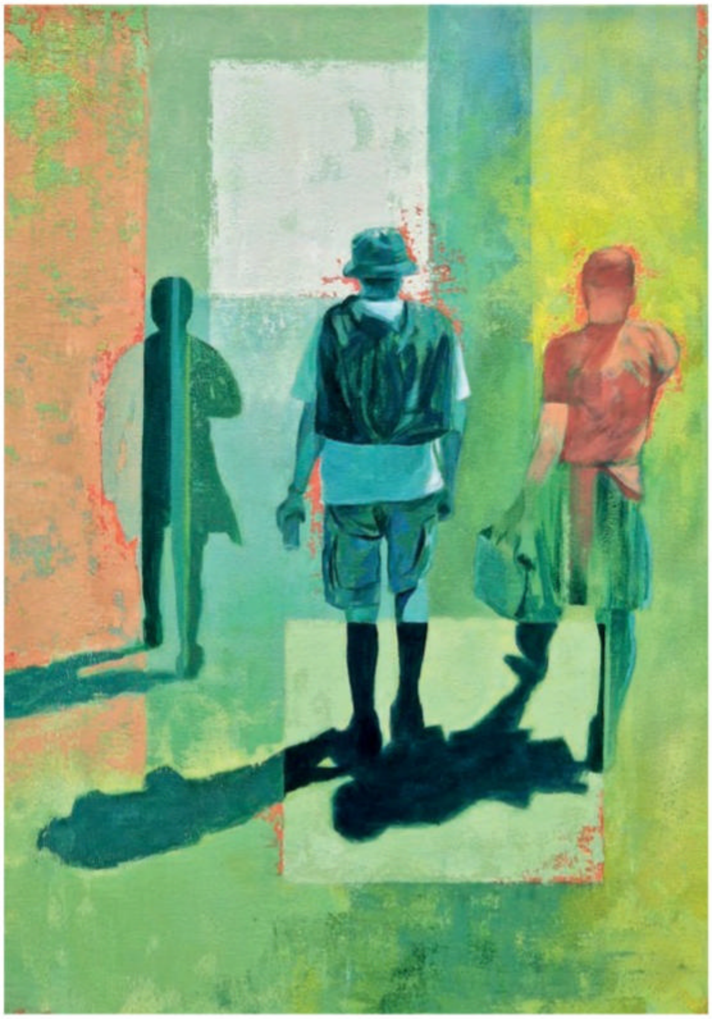
Raman Uppal

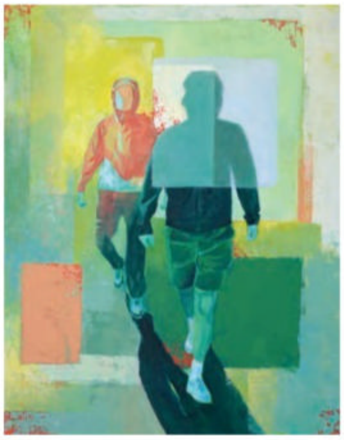
Blending art and engineering, this artist shares his path from lockdown commissions to a full-time creative practice

GROWING UP, I was always encouraged to embrace my creativity. My mother, who has always been creatively inclined, and my aunty, an artist throughout much of my life, provided a constant source of inspiration and exposure to the world of art. I always had something I'd be creating in my own time but, education-wise, it was consistently a subject I chose, continuing to study it until my A levels. In addition to my family influences, I was also heavily impacted by the world of film, which further shaped my artistic vision and passion. All of these experiences combined, I feel, have promoted a deep, lasting connection to the world of art, guiding me throughout my personal and academic journey.

Although I enjoyed science and maths at school, and was good at both, I always thought of myself as more of a creative. I've continuously found joy in creating art, not just as a way to tell stories, but for the enjoyment of the process itself. Whether in school or outside of it, art was the part of my day that I found the most fulfilling.

The move to study Mechanical Engineering never felt like a big transition; it was always something in the realm of possibilities. I knew the art would never stop outside of study, just slow down. I saw engineering as a way to apply mathematics and science to real-world problems, with creativity at the core.





TOP *Reverie*, acrylic on canvas, 51x41x3.8cm **ABOVE** *Recollection*, acrylic on canvas, 51x41x3.8cm **RIGHT** *Mr Beam*, acrylic on canvas, 60x45x3.8cm

During the lockdown, I had time to reflect and focus on art. It was never about making it a full-time job; creating was an expression and an outlet. Over time, social media brought attention to my work, leading to commissions as well as deeper engagement.

I have always worked in both abstract and figurative spaces, often bringing structure through geometric shapes. This balance between fluidity and order is key to my artistic process. Digital art has become a useful tool alongside traditional work. It allows me to experiment with new ideas without altering the original painting, which can break through creative blocks.

Art has never been a fixed journey; it's always evolving. Moving from engineering to art has had challenges, especially in building a viable business, but it has also been fulfilling to combine my scientific background with my creative practice.

Throughout this journey, I have tried to remain as authentic as I can to my vision while also being open to new experiences.

ramanvisuals.com □

RAMAN'S TIPS FOR BECOMING A FULL-TIME ARTIST

1

Create always

It doesn't have to be perfect, failure will inform you way more than success will.

2

Find or make a good creative community of like-minded people

The sharing of ideas, the support, the new people you meet is hugely beneficial as painting can often be isolating.

3

Get the basics down, then learn when to break them

You need to know the rules to know when to break them.

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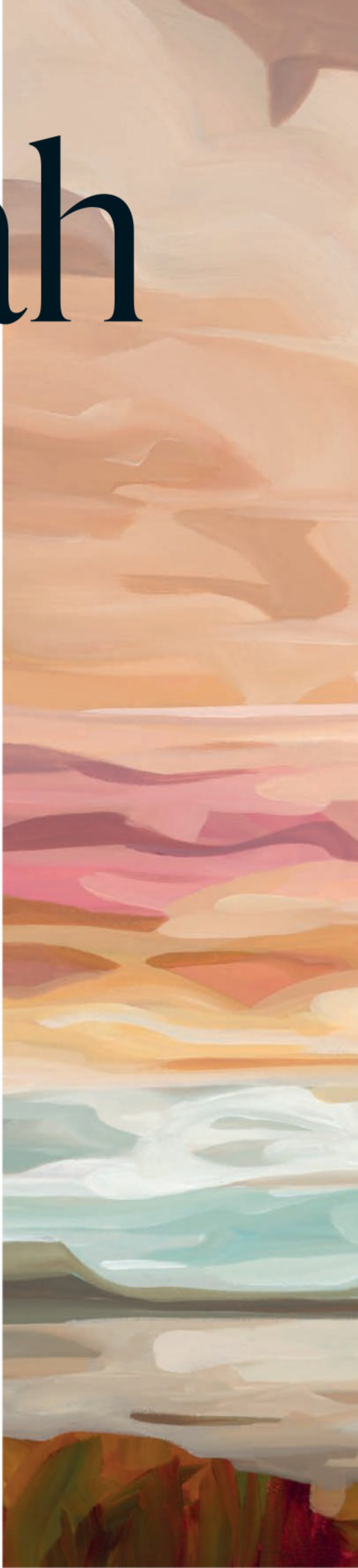
Susannah Bleasby

This Canadian artist turns abstraction into a celebration of nature, with some unpredictability, says *Ramsha Vistro*

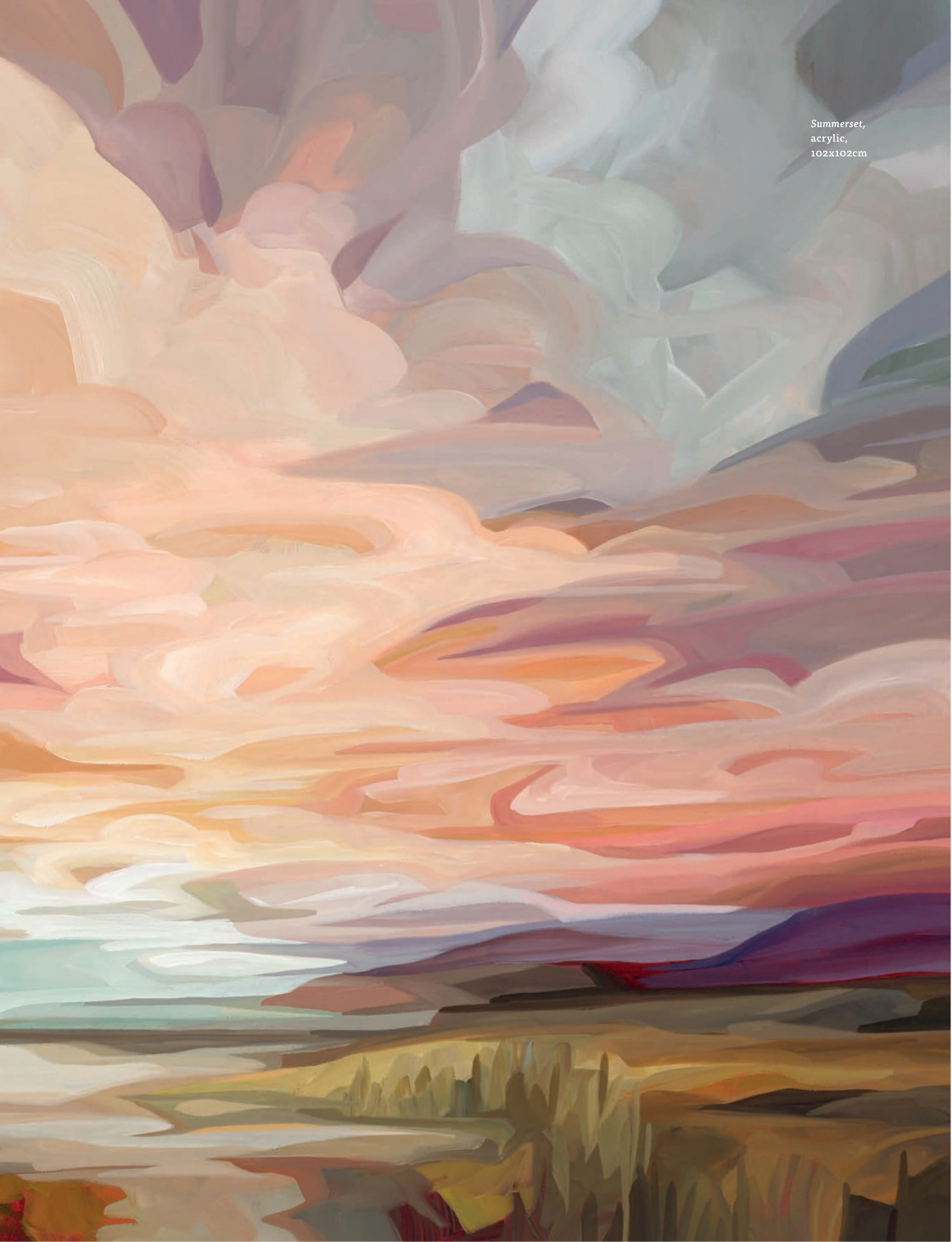


Susannah Bleasby didn't get into art school. She was told she didn't "have what it takes;" a verdict that sent her spiralling away from the creative life she instinctively knew she wanted. Fortunately, that wasn't the end of the story. Two decades later, Susannah is a full-time artist with a thriving practice, a loyal following and a body of work that confidently straddles the line between expressive abstraction and reverence for nature.

Based in Hamilton, Ontario, Susannah's colour-saturated canvases are unapologetically optimistic, but there's a rigour behind the play. Decades of experimentation, a background in illustration and a refusal to settle for anything less than "the spark" have shaped a practice that's both intuitive and exacting.

Susannah favours acrylics (as they're quick-drying, forgiving and chaotic in all the right ways), names her floral paintings like old friends and prefers imagination to *en plein air* when it comes to her big, windswept landscapes. A longtime devotee of abstract painting, she's also a champion of the odd, the unexpected and what she calls "the perfectly imperfect." The result is work that feels spontaneous but deliberate. With support from her sister and business partner, Nicola, she has built a career that's not just about the art itself but the life she's fought for.

susannahbee.com ▶



Summerset, acrylic, 102x102cm

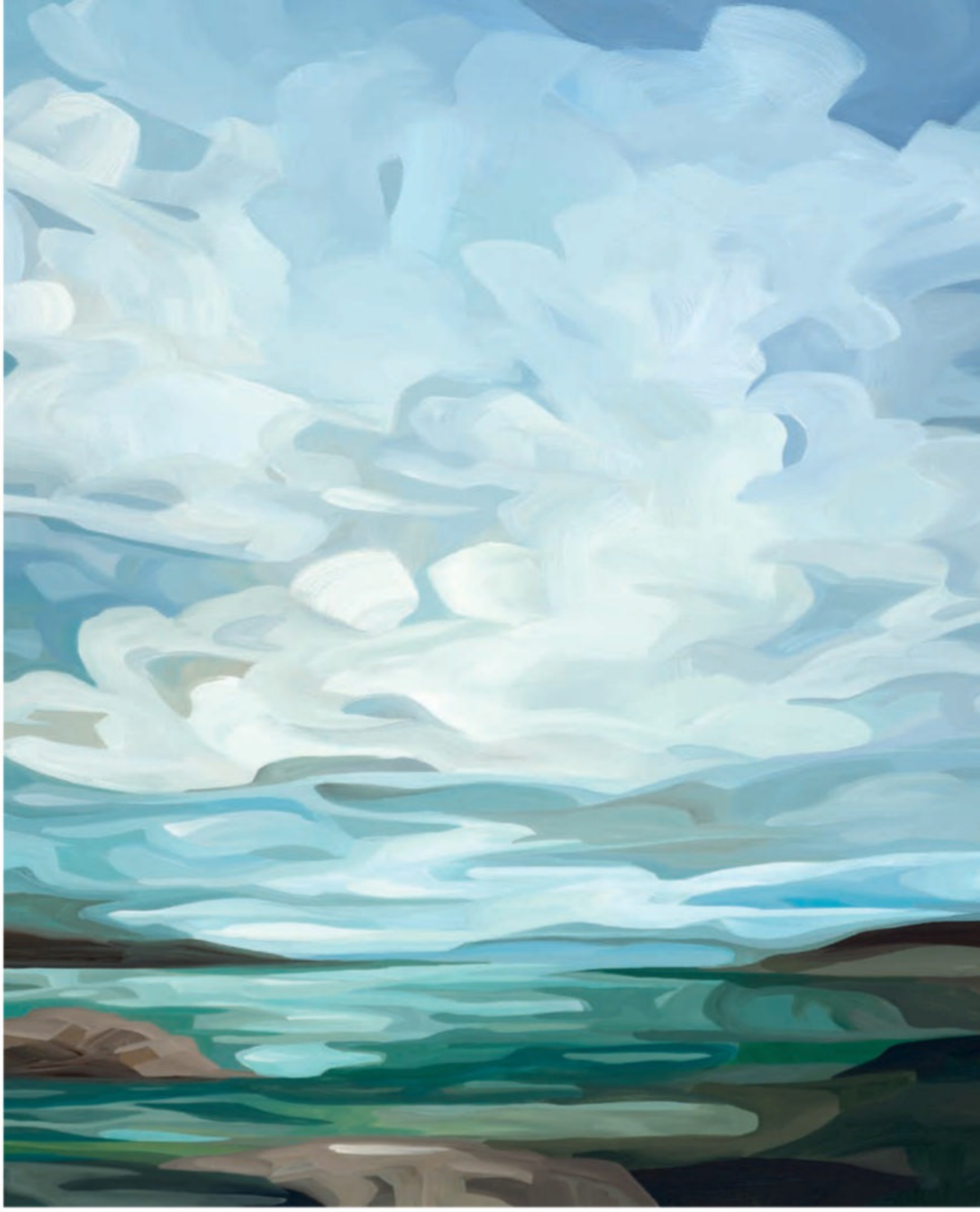
I'm so grateful to have grown up before the internet, phones and social media took over.
In my early years, I was more imaginative than anything. TV wasn't that big a thing, so, we played. We built forts and climbed trees, made mud pies and rode bikes. We put on plays, danced in the basement, read books and wrote stories. I have always been drawn to art and storytellers; I've just carried that kind of wonder forward and followed my imagination, come what may.

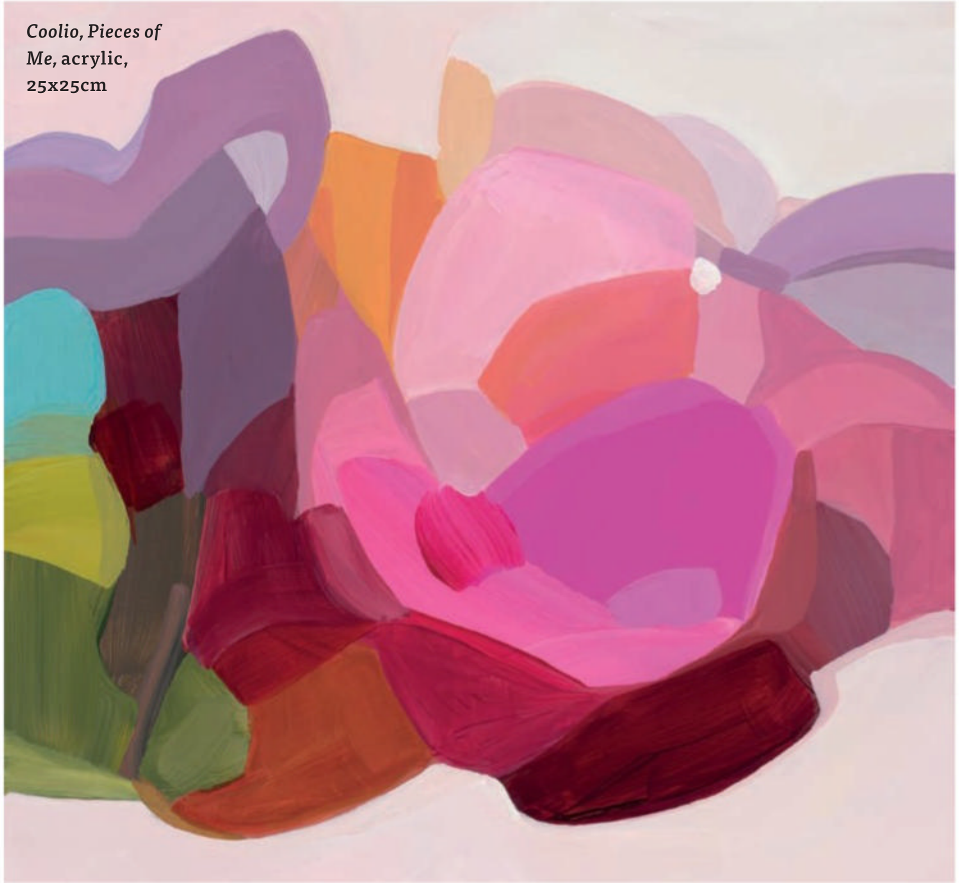
I have played with all sorts of mediums, from printmaking and ceramics to watercolours and ink.
I've settled on acrylics and to some extent, oils. Acrylics appeal to the colour lover in me. The immediacy of the result and ability to edit as I go are brilliant for the spontaneous nature of my process. Clean-up is also easy; great for my tendency to be a bit messy. I do love the buttery texture of oils and hope to incorporate them more into my work in the years ahead. I often use oils for abstract paintings when I'm looking to push myself. The uncontrolled 'happy accidents' can be thrilling breakthrough moments.

Not getting into art school is a rather long and ugly chapter of my story.
But it's also the reason my work means so much to me now. I really fought for it, and it means the world to me as it gave me my life back. As dramatic as that sounds, I absolutely know without question that I wouldn't be alive had I not somehow connected with my creative heart, found my art and with that, discovered my purpose.

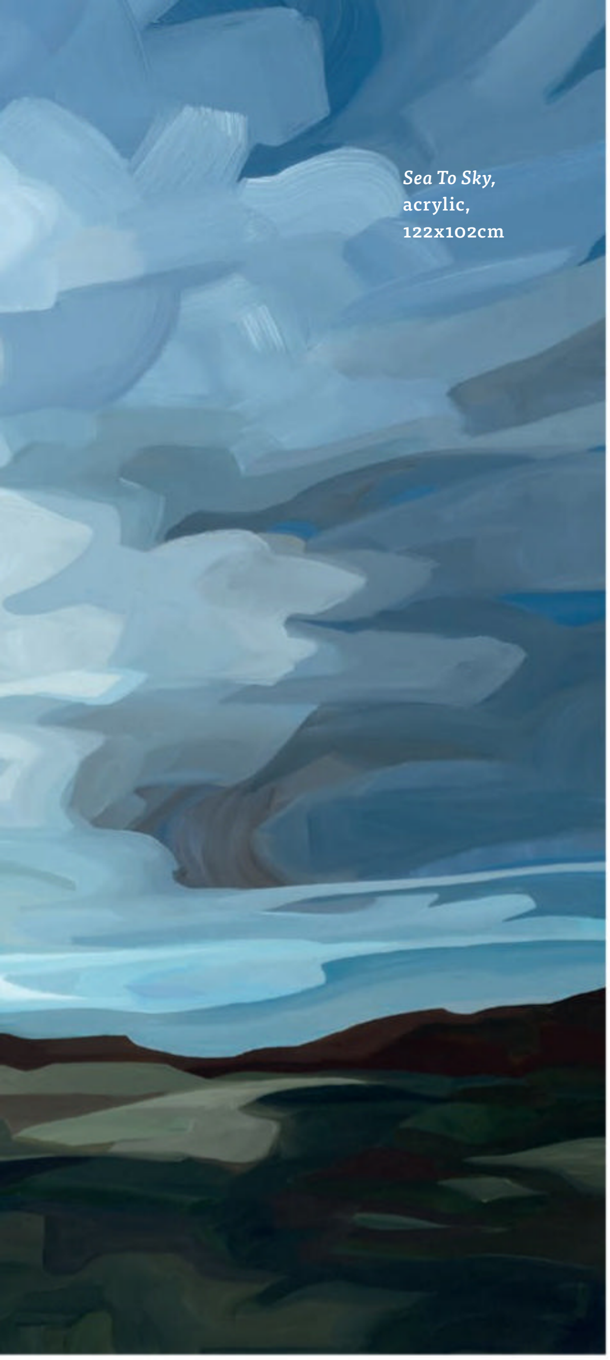
I have been painting or illustrating pretty much full time for almost 25 years now.
Much of my early career involved children's illustration and developing a line of children's fabric, as well as over a decade spent as the resident artist at SickKids hospital in Toronto, where I filled the hallways with child-friendly murals. My own painting practice started to take shape during those years and has been my sole focus for the last nine. I can't imagine ever doing anything else.

Abstracts are my first love and the most purely 'me' of everything I do.
They're exciting but also challenging. It's often assumed that blobbing paint around is easy, but getting the elements of a strong piece – the balance of colours, placement of shapes, compositional structure and flow – to work and feel great is difficult. Landscapes, big skies and flowers are expressions of my gratitude for the natural world, and my way ▶

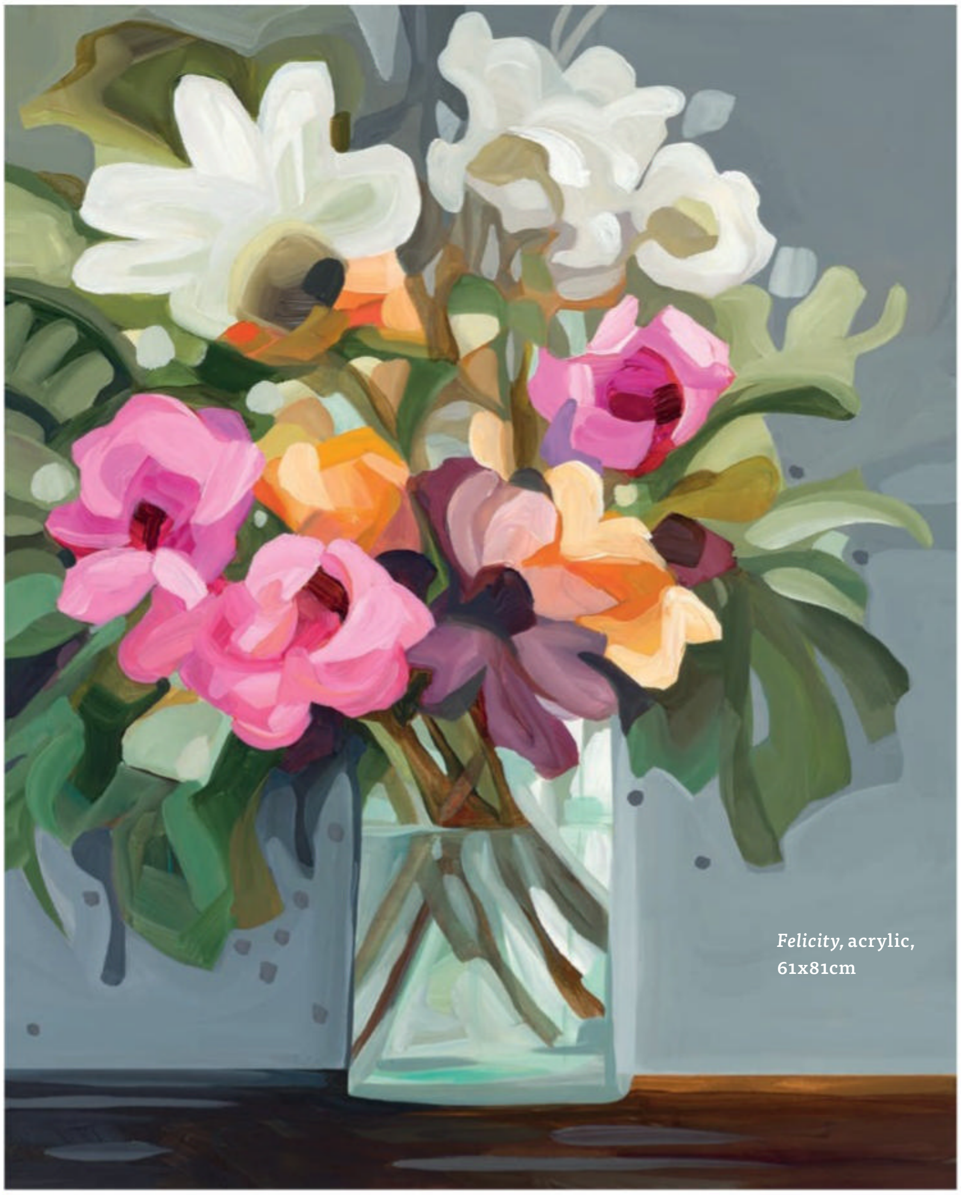




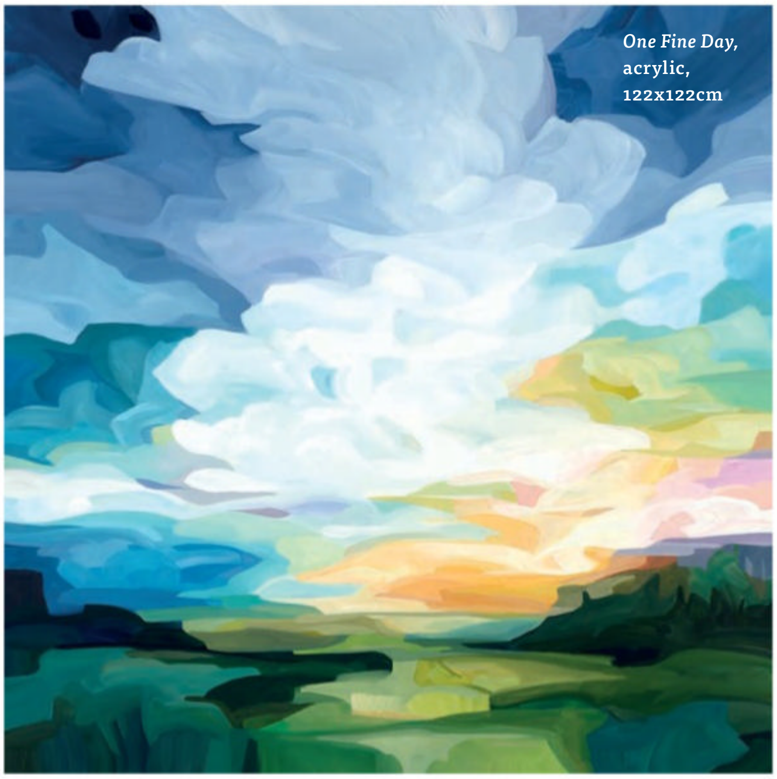
***Coolio, Pieces of Me*, acrylic, 25x25cm**



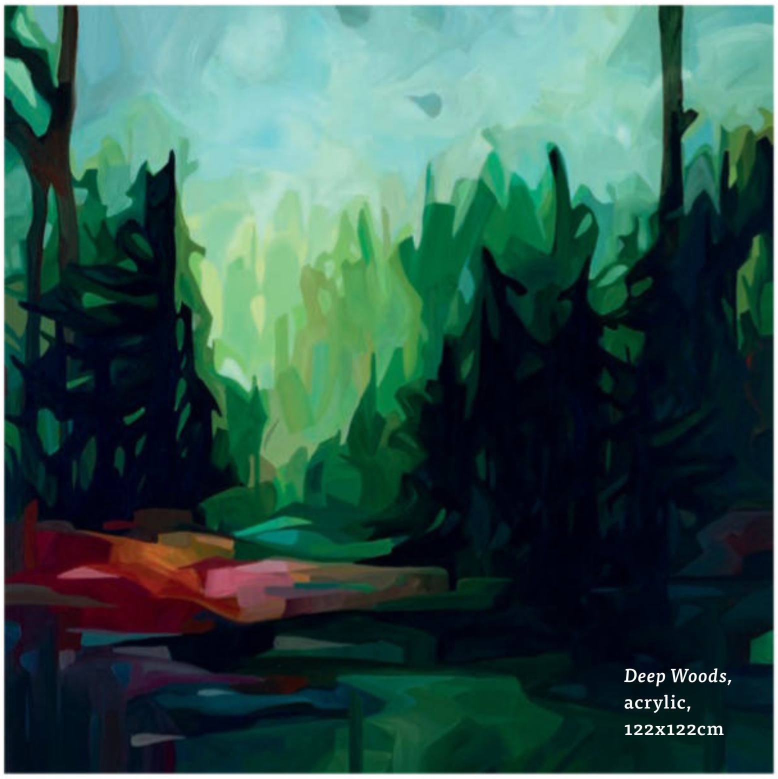
Sea To Sky, acrylic, 122x102cm



Felicity, acrylic, 61x81cm



One Fine Day, acrylic, 122x122cm



Deep Woods, acrylic, 122x122cm

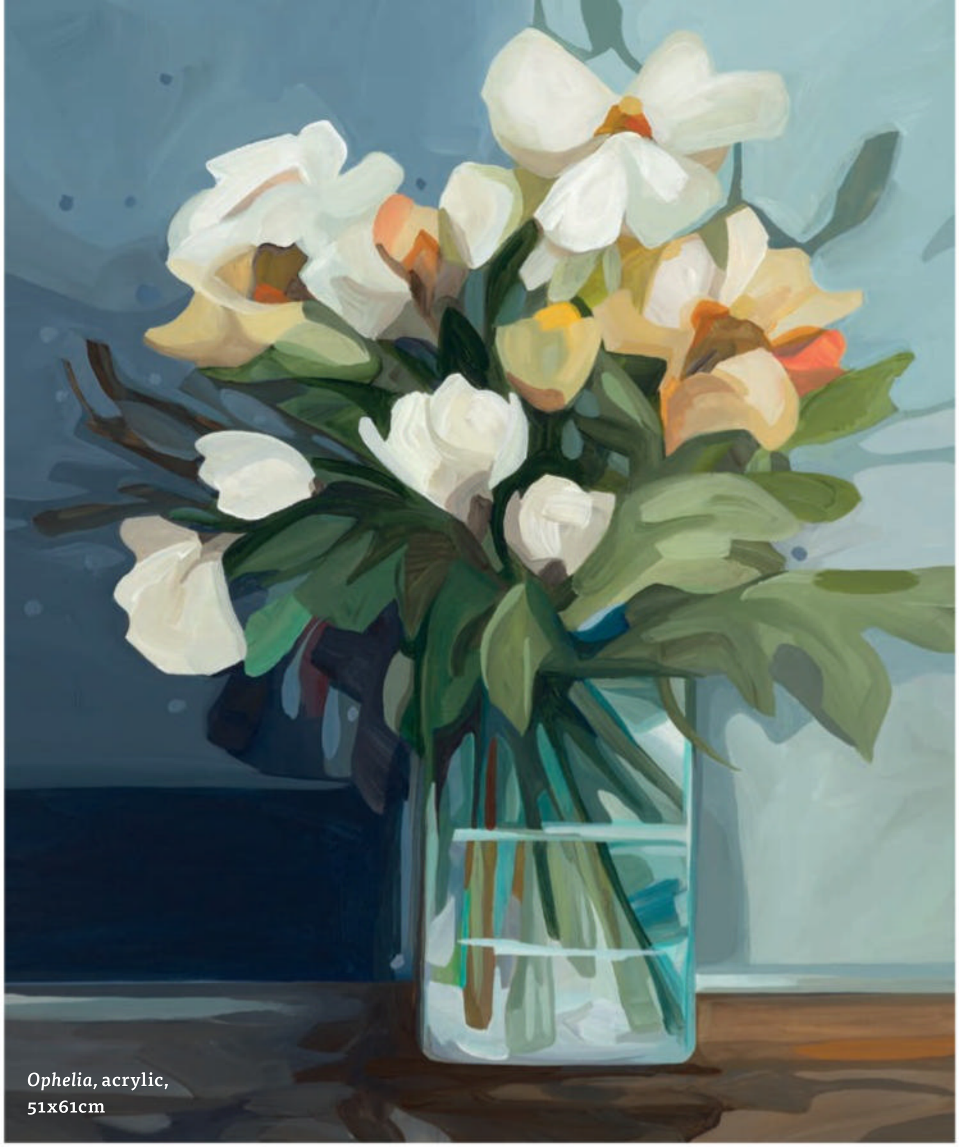
of connecting to the part of me that craves fresh air and outdoor life. I'm always chasing the light, peace and joy in nature; the basis of the work I want to put out into the world.

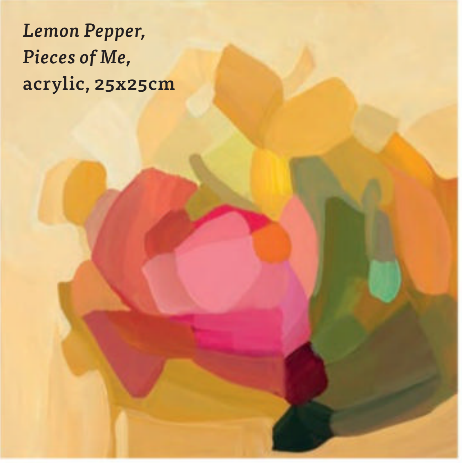
Closing my studio door is so healing.
Letting myself be swept into a never-ending sky or tangled in a floral bouquet is my way of quieting anxiety and fears about modern life. No matter what I do, I'm seeking to capture the way my subject makes me feel, the emotions stirred and share that with my audience. I have two studio spaces. The third floor of my house is a beautifully finished attic with built-in flat storage shelves for supplies and a huge paint-splattered harvest table. I also have a drying/storage room on the second floor with wall ledges for leaning paintings. My main studio is in a repurposed old factory in Hamilton, now a thriving arts hub. It's a bright corner unit with windows, a gas fireplace, hardwood floors and high ceilings. A 12-foot table sits at the centre, with easels and painting rails along the wall. I feel inspired every day I'm there.

While I'm a very out-doorsy person, I do not paint *en plein air*.
I take my camera but leave my sketchbook and painting kit behind. My skies are completely from my imagination, but all are based on some memory, feeling or vision of a place I have been or dream of going to. My landscapes are more about capturing the quiet and calm of nature; the power and peace of the wind, the magnificent aloneness of wide-open spaces and the wild, free and great outdoors.

Revenue from art comes in various forms.
These include licensed artwork and illustrations, royalties from fabric sales, sales of original paintings and fine art prints across all categories plus home and lifestyle products. My sister Nicola – who brilliantly manages and develops my business – has introduced these over the years. I used to take on a fair number of commissions, but I've pulled back on committing myself to custom projects unless it's something that really excites me and only for clients I think understand and respect my process.

I have such a love/hate relationship with social media.
It's opened up the world to me: sharing my art, growing my audience and selling my work. I've connected with so many encouraging, supportive, art-loving people. But if I could make a living just painting without thinking about content for an algorithm, I would. I'm not great at it and resent the time it sucks from my life. Ideally, I'd unplug completely.


Ophelia, acrylic, 51x61cm


Lemon Pepper, Pieces of Me, acrylic, 25x25cm

I absolutely know I wouldn't be alive had I not connected with my creative heart

I love that my brushstrokes are identifiable as mine.
It has taken years and years of consistently working, exploring and pushing myself forward to arrive at a place where, what I'm seeing on the canvas, is both what I'm envisioning in my head and what feels right for me. I like bringing my love for abstracts into my work, no matter what and it's the best way of making truly authentic, original work. I strive for brushstrokes that flow and curve; I like to see movement and life in my paintings. I like defined shapes and clean lines (I mostly use flat, bright or filbert brushes) and fairly solid, confident colour placements. I often blend colours right on the canvas, but no matter what I'm painting, I'm hoping to see magic – unexpected, unplanned moments that show up in the process.

I want the viewer to fall in love with colour and realise the value of art.
I hope people touch the spirit of the sky with me: to feel the playful joy that abstract blobs of paint can generate; to sense the uplifting hope in my work. Even if someone dislikes it, it means they felt something. Ultimately, I'm dedicated to putting positive, inspired, authentically "me" art into this broken world, honouring my purpose and making it brighter one painting at a time. The best thing about my work is that it's my play, obsession, hobby, purpose, ambition and life. I'm so grateful for how far I've come. □

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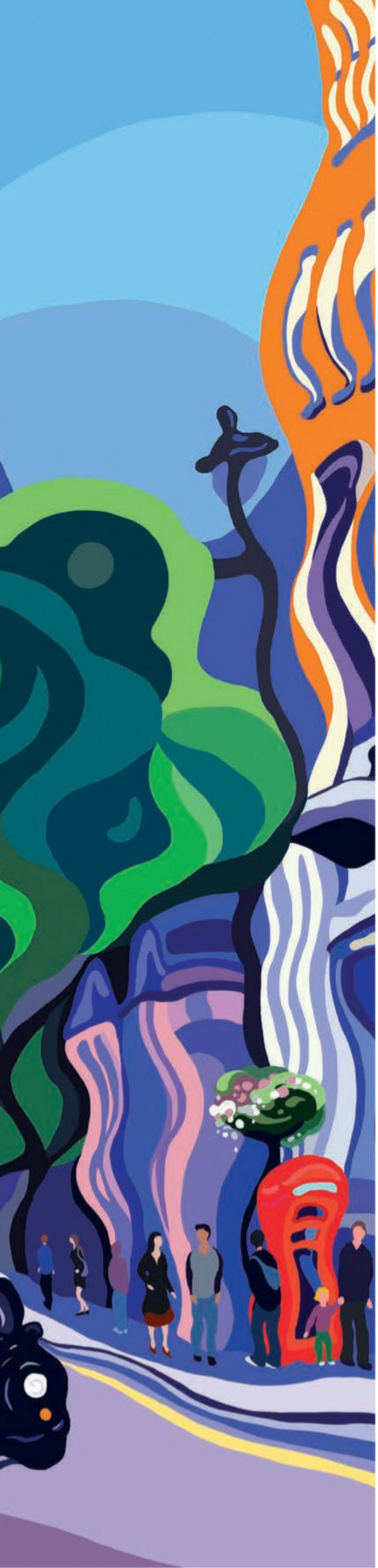
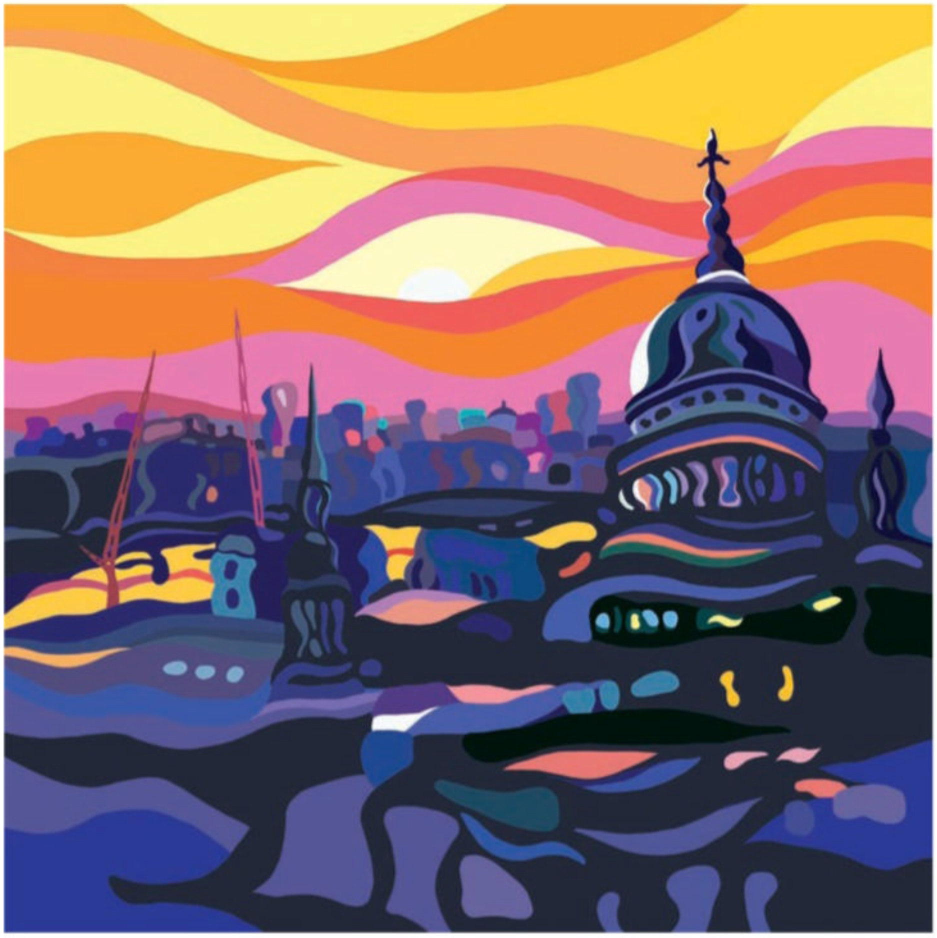
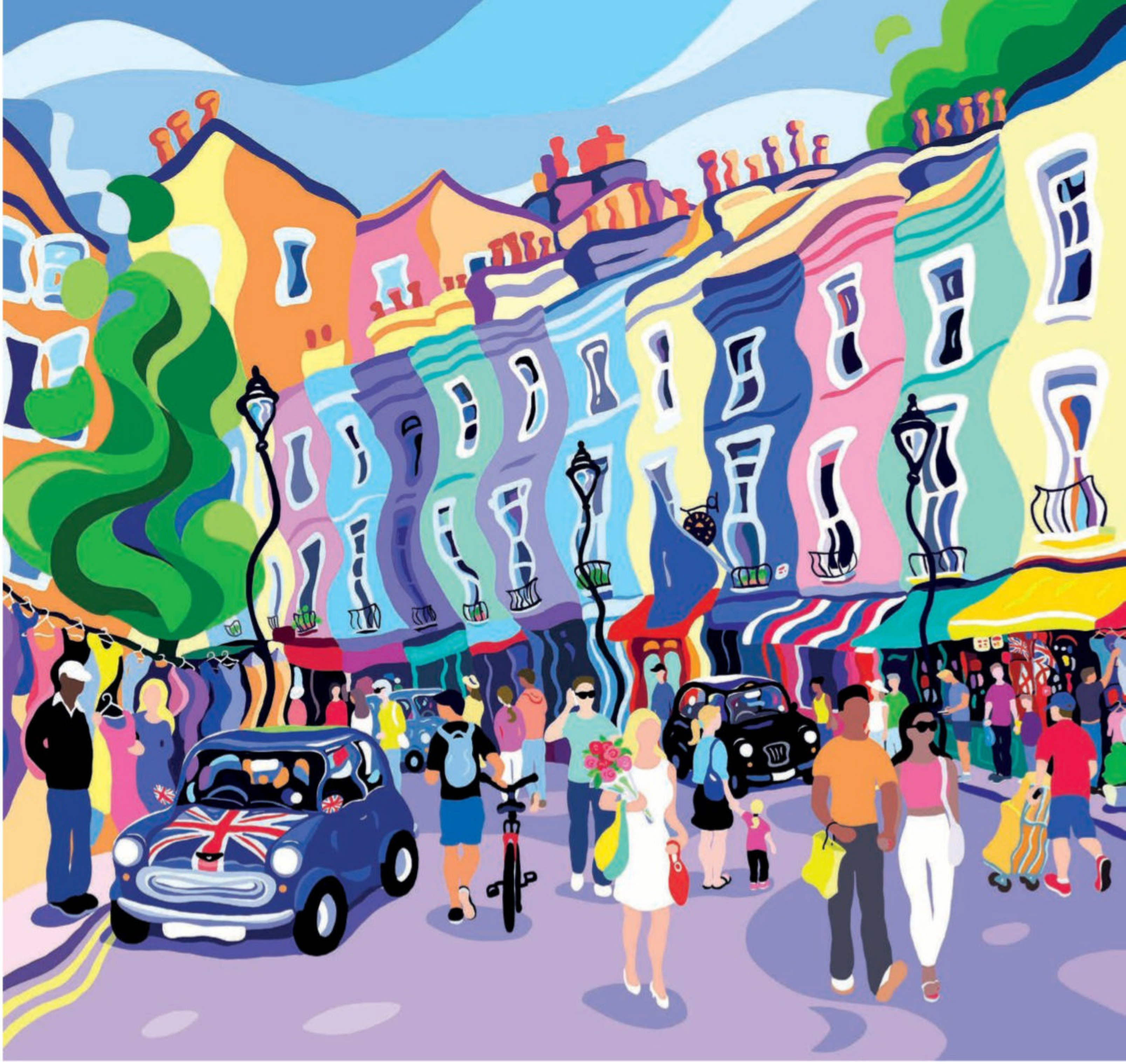


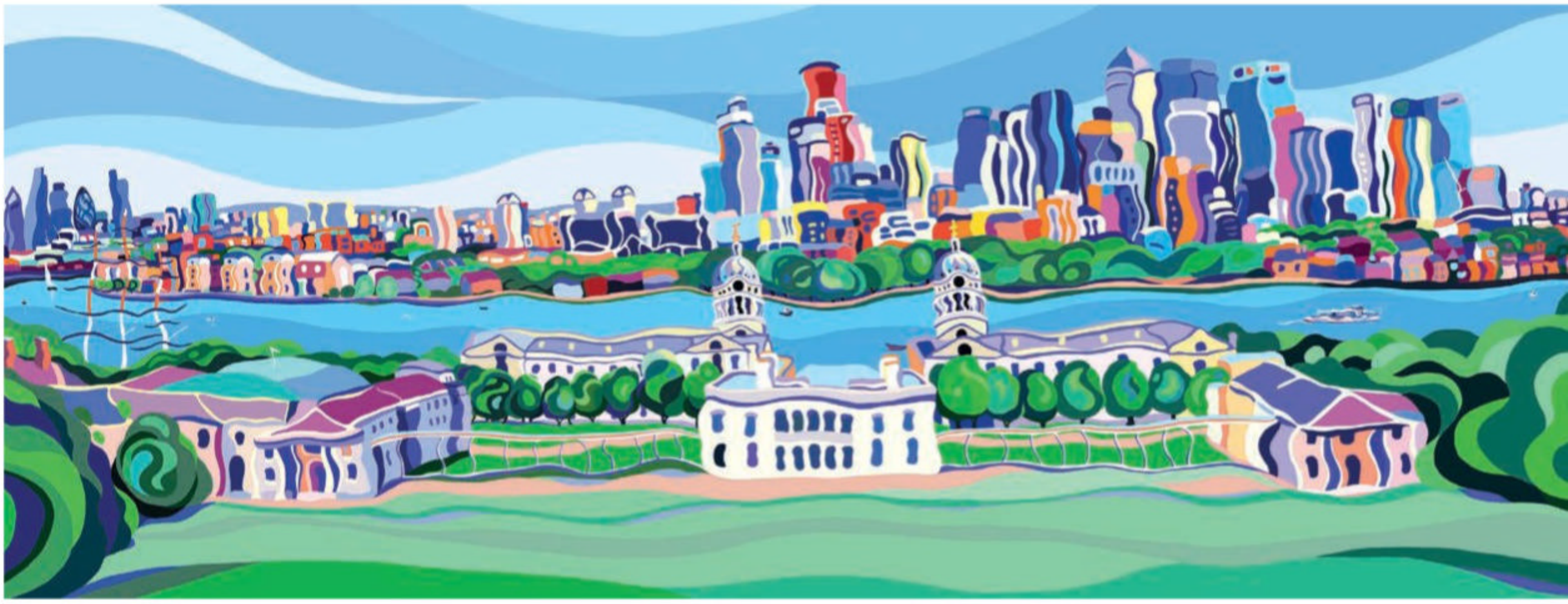
Sarah Fosse

Working from her central London studio, this artist portrays the stunning vistas of major international cities using rich, vibrant colours, energy and atmosphere. You can't fail to be uplifted, says *Niki Browes* ▶



LEFT *Towards Big Ben*, acrylic, 80x80cm **ABOVE** *St Paul's Sunset*, acrylic, 80x80cm





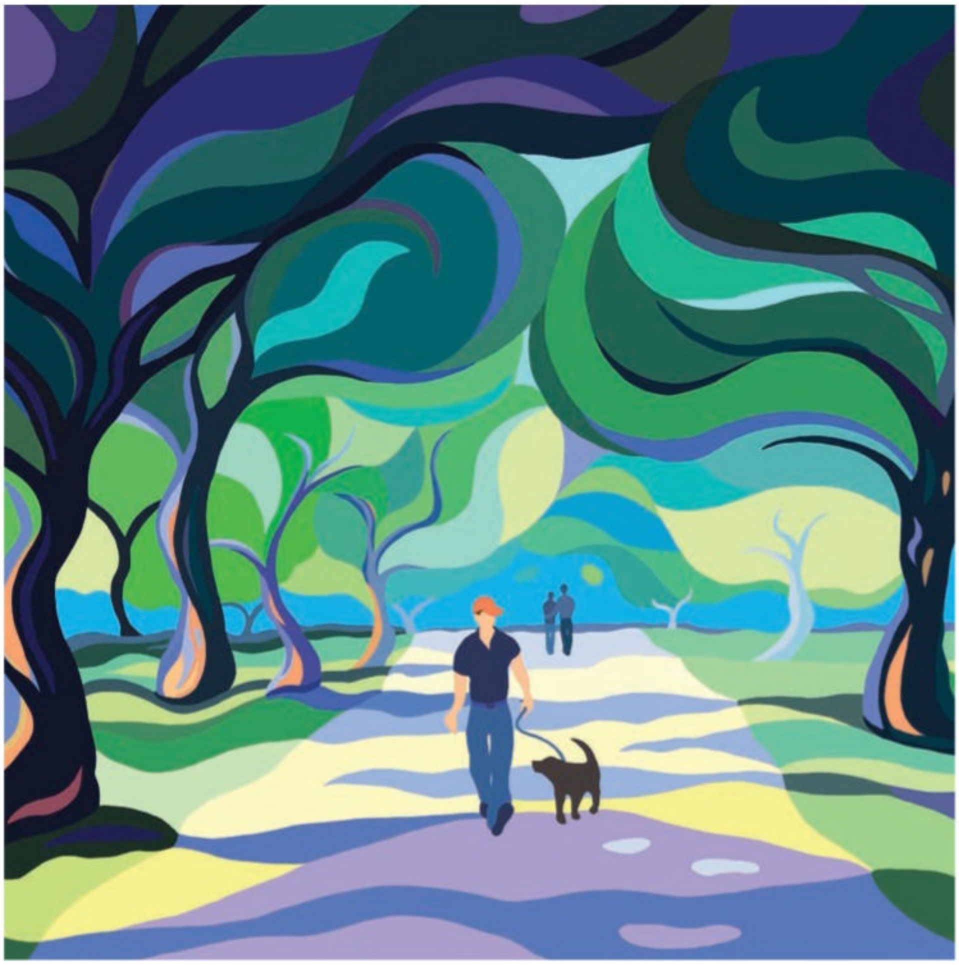
A Liverpudlian by birth, Sarah Fosse grew up in Jersey in the Channel Islands. She travelled all over the world before settling in the Docklands in London, which is one of the main inspirations for her paintings, along with New York, Hong Kong and Paris, all her favourite cities. Having always lived near water, be it coastal or on the river, Sarah has a fascination with its movement, reflections and energy, which has also inspired her truly unique and energetic style, sometimes described as 'wobble.' Favouring acrylics, her passion for Fauvism and Expressionism is unmistakably conveyed by her bold, vibrant colour palette and the manner in which she deconstructs and distorts the urban landscape. She can boast private and corporate collectors across Europe, North America, Africa, Asia and Australia. ***sarahfosse.com***

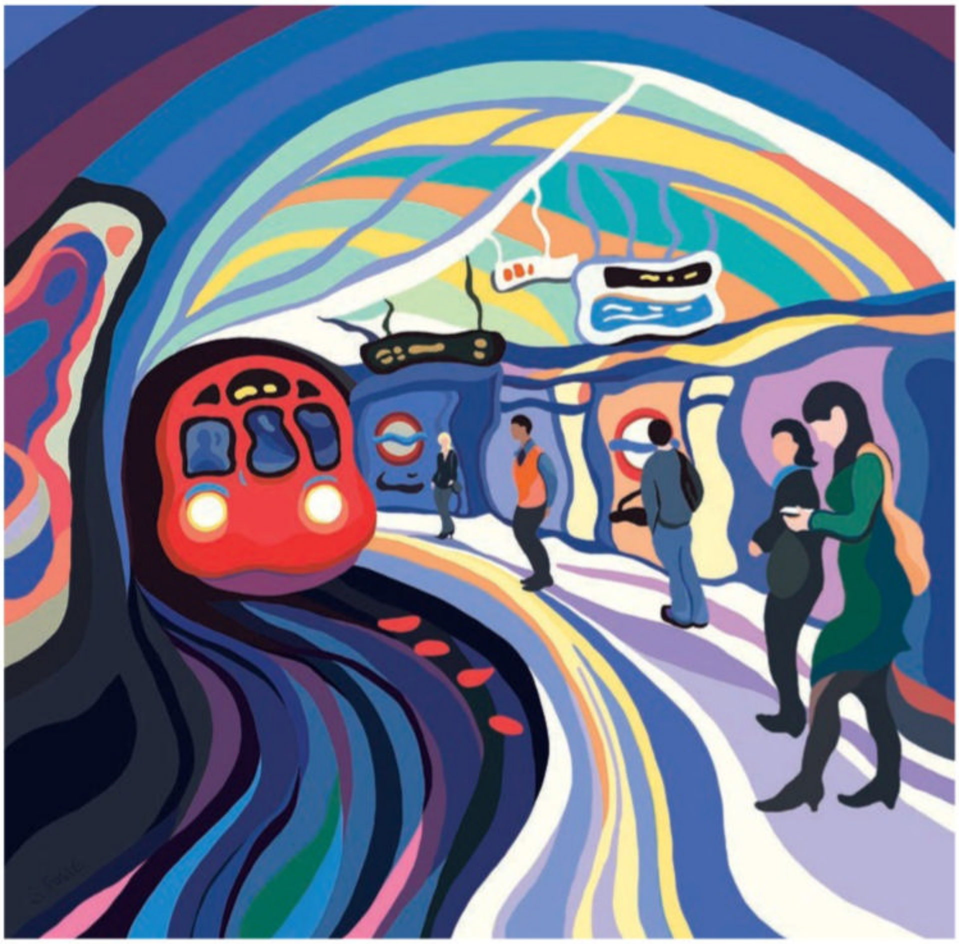
I've been addicted to drawing and painting for as long as I can remember.
I've still got some of my drawings from when I was three years old. My mother was a professional artist based in the South of France. She created the most unique and captivating paintings of Provence, and was my greatest inspiration.

I studied art at GCSE and A Level.
I then worked in different industries but never stopped painting and self-teaching. The tens of thousands of hours I've spent playing, experimenting and learning through trial and error have been an invaluable education for developing my style.

I love acrylic paint because it's bold and bright.
It really lends itself to the solid fields of colour that are integral to my paintings. The flexibility and fast drying time really helps with my busy workload.

Cities, especially those with exciting architecture such as London, are my favourite subjects.
Upon locating to the Docklands in 2005, I became obsessed with the skyline and its reflections upon the river and docks and began creating paintings featuring this subject matter. I enjoyed experimenting with spirally, wavy shapes to represent the water and this led to abstracting buildings, trees, vehicles and people in this way too. I really enjoyed the results and received great feedback from galleries and art lovers, and have been creating these unique cityscapes ever since. My passion for bold colours adds dynamism and vibrancy to the style. ▸





OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP *Notting Hill Colours*, acrylic, 80x80cm **BOTTOM** *Greenwhich Vista*, acrylic, 80x80cm
THIS PAGE: TOP *Summer Stroll*, acrylic, 80x80cm **BOTTOM** *Heaading Home*, acrylic, 80x80cm

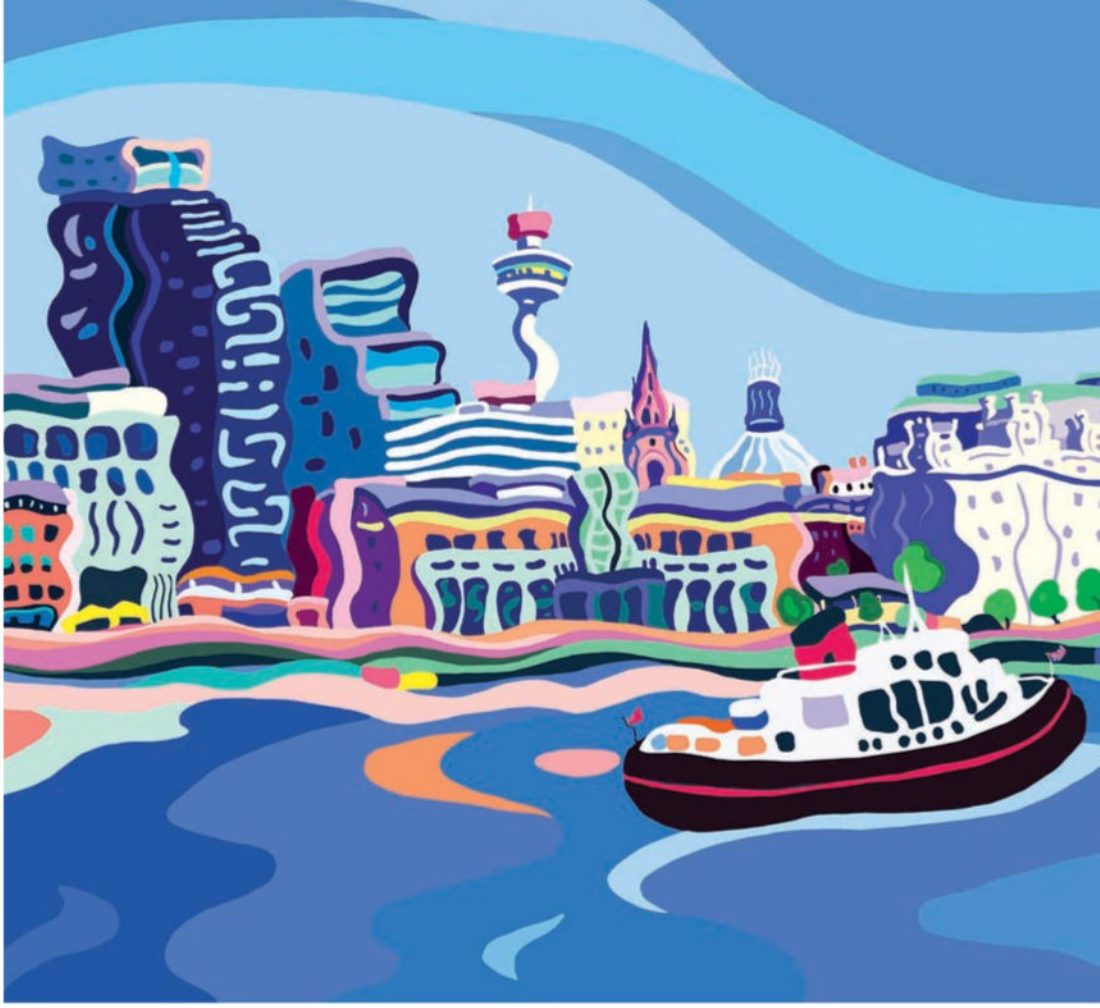
A good composition happens instinctively, but it must contain elements that are pleasing to the eye in terms of ratio, balance, focal point and colour.
I want the scene to flow, drawing the viewer in and there has to be a strong use of complementary colour and tonal contrasts. Still, I love the energy and vibe of cities and their unique personalities. They are full of quirks and colours, which really influence my style.

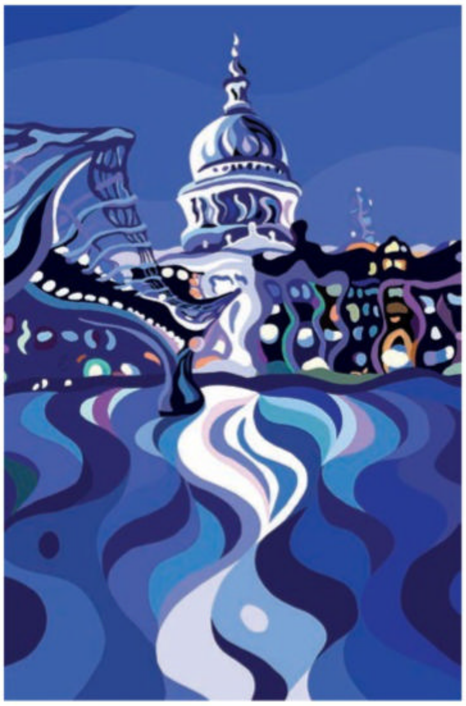
Sometimes clients want something a little bit extra special or bespoke and if I feel I can make a great job of it, I'm always delighted to oblige.
The process involves lots of discussion and preliminary sketches to make sure the client will be thrilled with the final painting. Commissions have ranged from students graduating outside Oxford University's iconic Bodleian Library, to families and pets strolling park or riverside, right through to six-foot paintings of London's Portobello Market or its famous skylines.

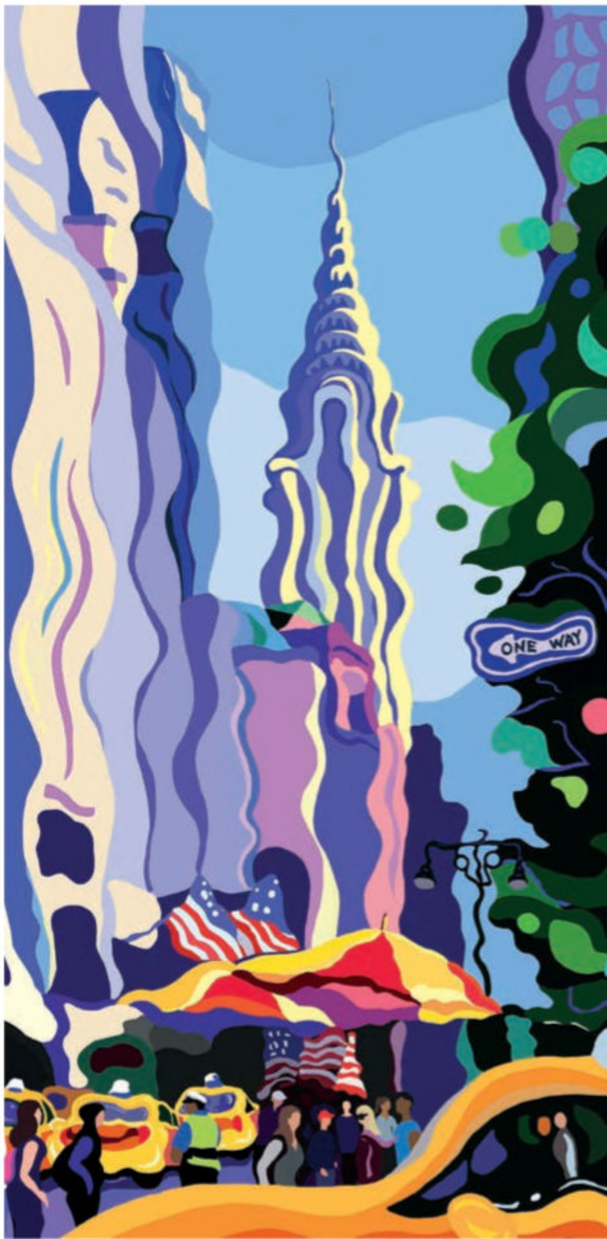
My inspiration comes from artists and immersing myself in atmospheric places.
I've always been a huge admirer of the Fauvists and their use of colour, especially Andre Derain's London paintings. I love the energy and character in the nightlife works of Toulouse Lautrec. Another inspiration is the bold simplicity of the Pop Art movement, whilst I adore the large blocks of flat colour found in Colour Field painting. Wolf Kahn, a favourite artist of mine, painted this way and his landscapes are stunning.

My style is a combination of Surrealism and Realism, Pop Art and Colour Field.
I live near the River Thames, the wharves and docks of East London and am fascinated by the swirling dancing reflections of London's iconic architecture upon these bodies of water. I began painting these reflections, bringing them to life with simple lines, solid shapes and a bold colour palette. To add harmony and fluidity to the painting, I approached the rest of the subject matter – buildings, people and vehicles – in the same way. My style evolved through years of practise and experimentation playing with paint, colour and form.

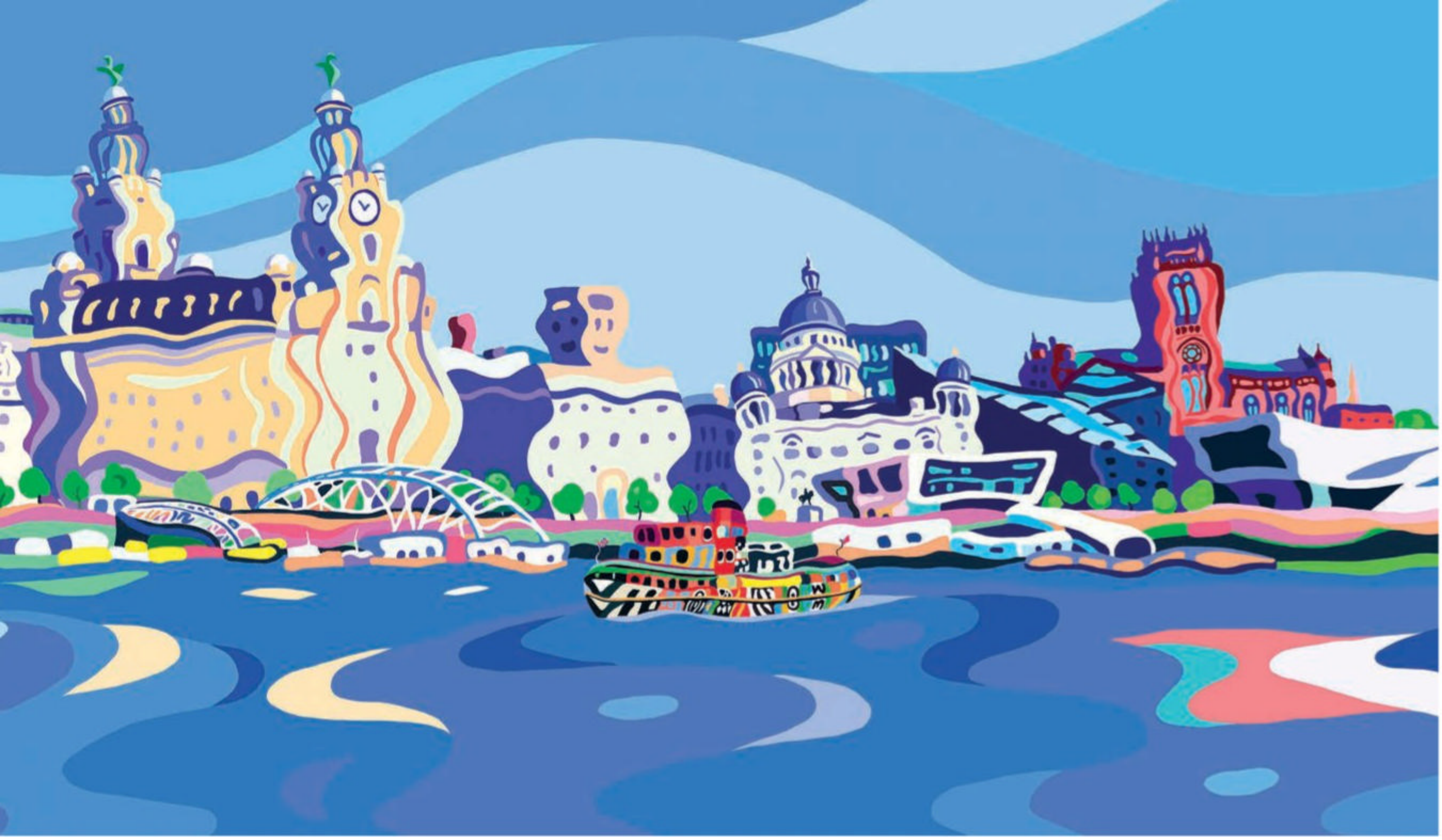
I have a home studio which I find convenient as I often work very long hours into the night.
I work during a normal day to make the most of the daylight and use the evenings for admin, packing sold artwork and updating my all-important social media accounts. These are great for sales and commissions but also for feedback. I regularly work to tight deadlines which will mean working into the small hours. I am most definitely a night owl. My workspace is chaos after completing a painting, with open tubes of paint, brushes and palettes of paint everywhere! I'd love to be tidy but it never seems to happen.







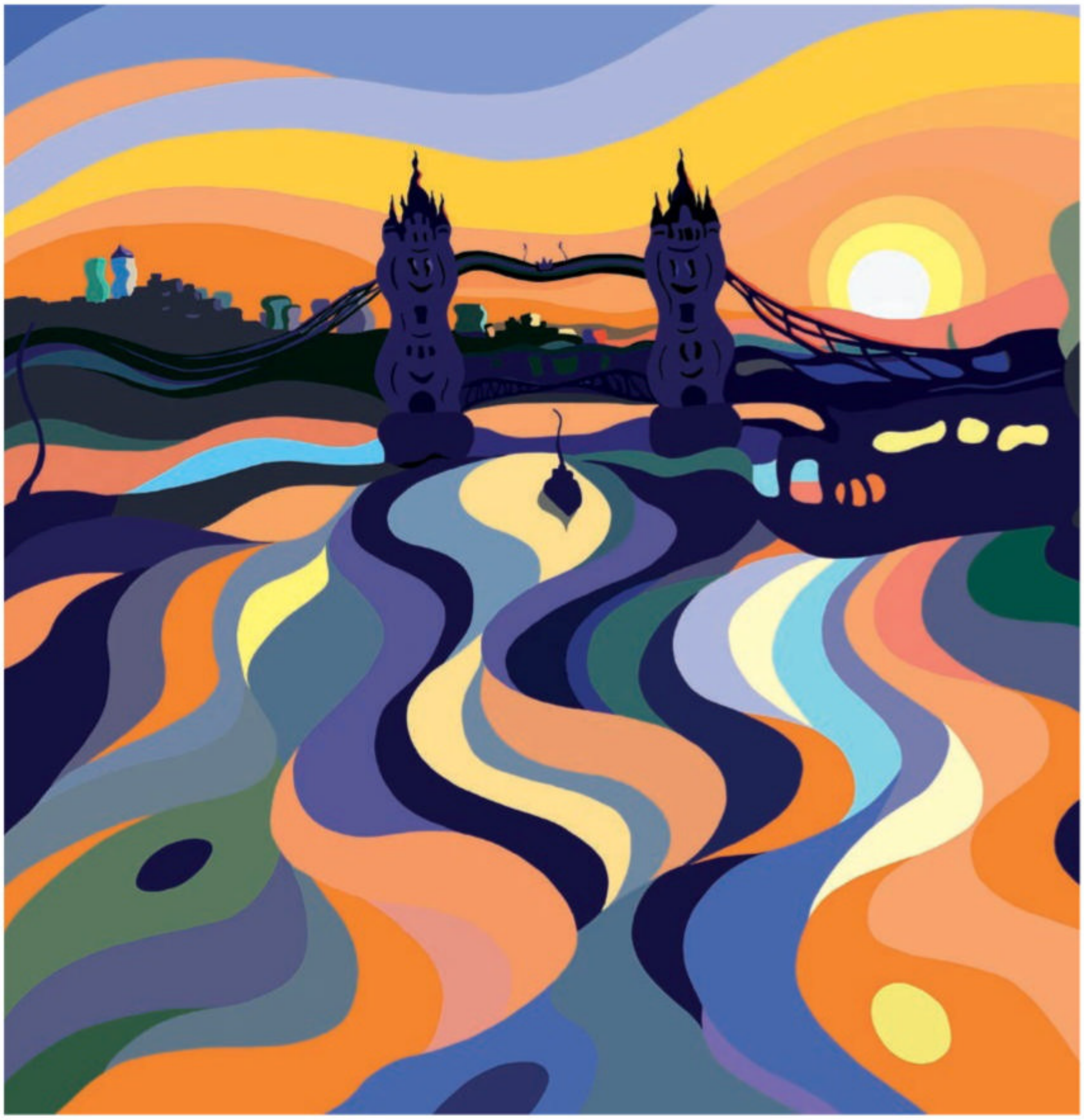
TOP *Love Liverpool*, acrylic, 30x90cm **ABOVE** *St Pauls Illuminations*, acrylic, 65x40cm **RIGHT** *The Chrysler Building*, acrylic, 60x30cm **FAR RIGHT** *Tower Bridge Sunset*, acrylic, 80x80cm

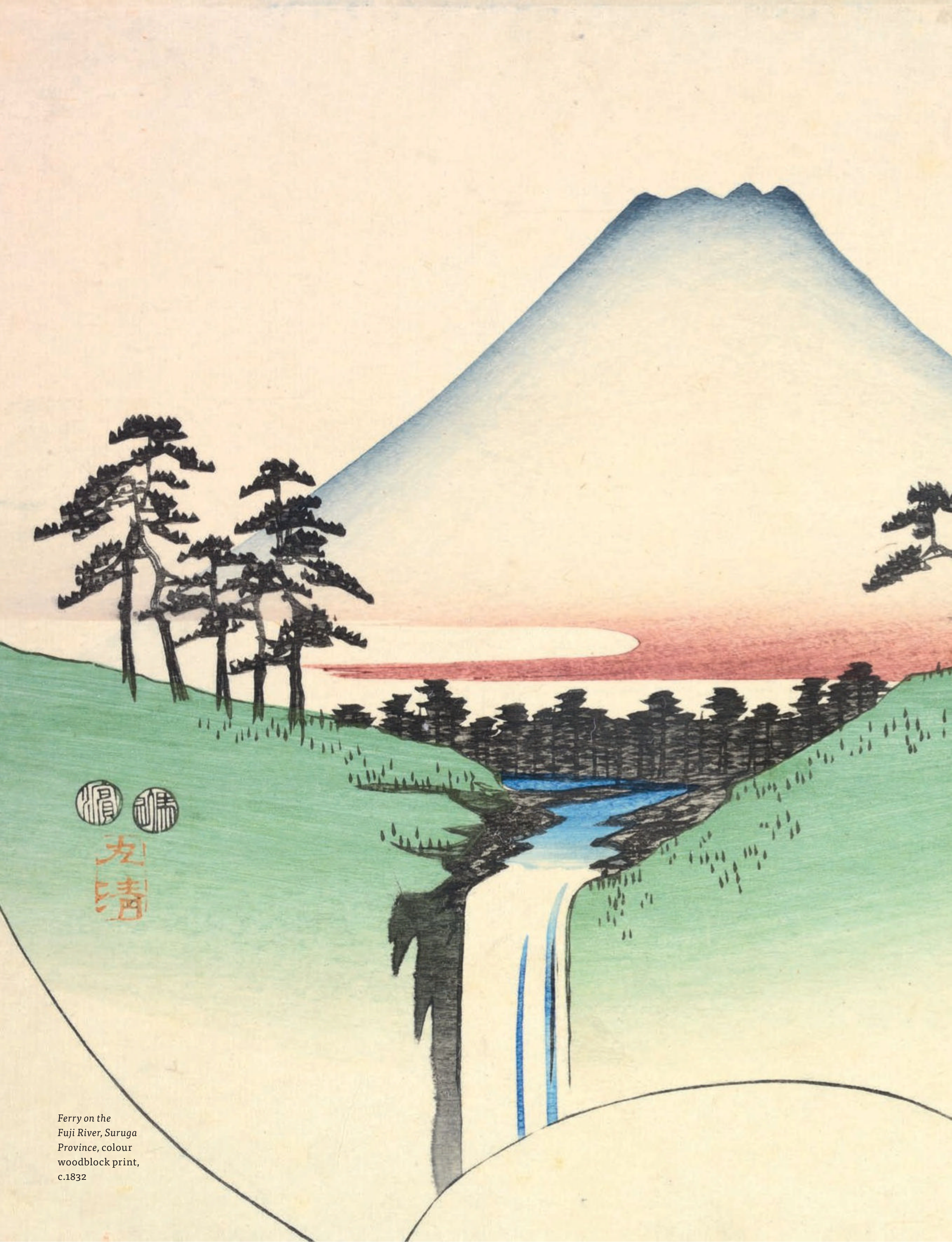


I create original prints which are limited in edition and I'm very fortunate that these sell really well.
It's not easy making a living as an artist so the print side of my business is really important. For anyone thinking of making it as a professional, this is a side that I can wholly recommend.

I am so impressed when I see my peers winning competitions and I can see how it's helped their careers go from strength to strength.
However, I can't really speak for myself because the last decade or so has been such a whirlwind developing my style and working towards major art fairs and solo shows, so I've yet to find the space in my diary to create a piece, especially for a competition. However, I am determined to make time for these in the near future, along with new bodies of work for the galleries I work with. And hopefully, time to explore and paint new cities.

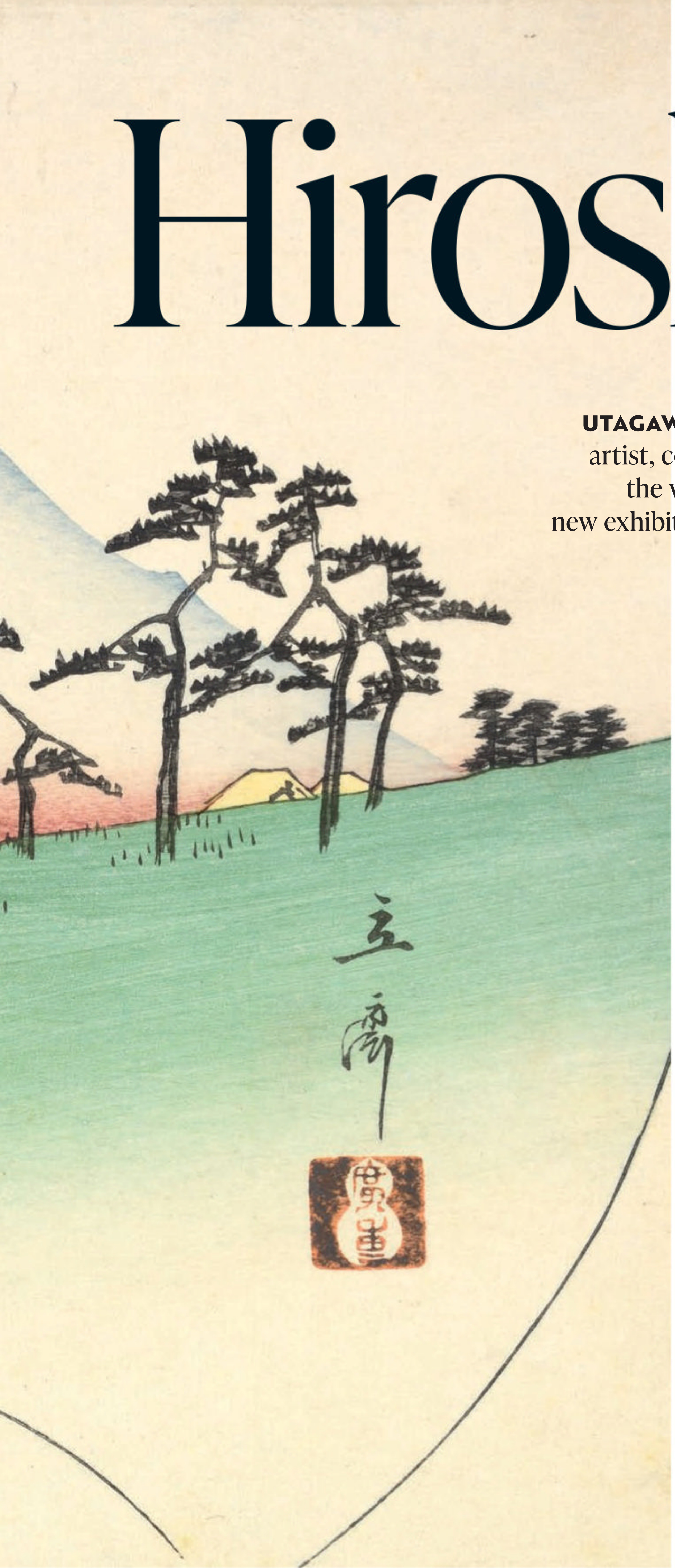
Feeling passionate about what I do, being fulfilled every day and never bored for a second makes me realise how lucky I am.
I get to meet fantastic artists, gallerists and clients. I am grateful for the wonderful opportunities to talk about my work, such as in schools and magazines, like this one. It brings me huge joy when people enjoy my work, especially when they spend their hard-earned money owning it. It's a tough industry in which to make a living but the highs most certainly outweigh the struggles. □





Ferry on the Fuji River, Suruga Province, colour woodblock print, c.1832

Hiroshige



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UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE was a Japanese ukiyo-e artist, considered the ultimate great master of the wood-block print tradition. An exciting new exhibition at the British Museum displays his work, as *Amanda Hodges* finds out

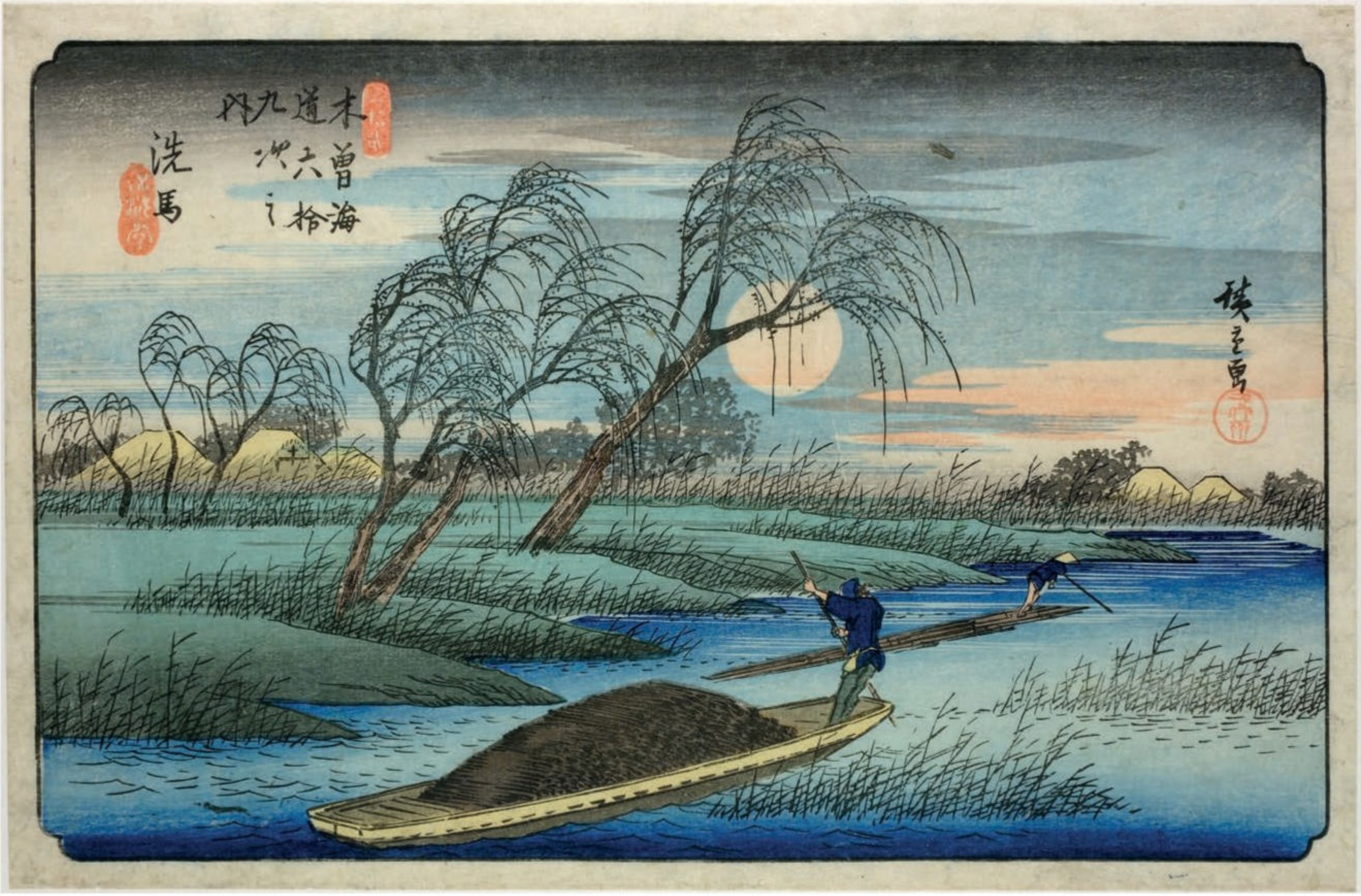
“I envy the Japanese for the enormous clarity that pervades their work,” wrote Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo in 1888. “They draw a figure with a few well-chosen lines as if it were as effortless as buttoning up one’s waistcoat.” The work of Hiroshige, a Japanese ukiyo-e artist, was considered the greatest of the wood-block print tradition.

Considered one of Japan’s most popular and prolific artists, cherished for imbuing the Japanese landscape with a lyricism that drew upon the fleeting nature of sensual thus transient pleasure. And now, courtesy of a new exhibition at the British Museum, UK visitors can delve into his distinctive 19th-century world, all seen through the prism of his prints, paintings, books and sketches.

At the heart of the exhibition – the first on this subject for 25 years – is what Curator for the Japanese Collections, Alfred Haft, calls “a major gift of 35 prints from the collection of Alan Medaugh. It’s an honour to share Hiroshige’s serene vision of Japan’s landscape through superb works from an outstanding collection.” Produced in vast quantities and hugely popular during the Edo period (1615-1868), these colourful woodblock prints, known as ukiyo-e depict scenes from everyday life in Japan. The word ‘ukiyo-e’ literally means ‘pictures of the floating world’, reflecting the urban culture of Edo, now contemporary Tokyo.

The gift given is extensive. It includes, “nature studies, uchiwa prints [uchiwa being a non-folding flat Japanese fan] and triptychs depicting fashionable figures in landscapes,” says Haft. Alan Medaugh, a leading US collector, has also lent another 82 prints, some considered amongst the finest exponents of this design, a core display bolstered by key national and international loans, and important works from the museum.

Medaugh explains the motivation for his bequest: “To me, this exhibition at the British Museum is the best way to keep Hiroshige’s art alive. His artistic strength is the use of colour to transmit feelings. I’ve had the privilege of collecting his works for over 50 years and it’s my sincere hope that by sharing these pieces I can help reveal the ▸



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timeless beauty and depth of his artistry."

What makes Hiroshige so distinctive? Haft explains, "Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) rose from humble samurai beginnings to become one of Japan's most talented and successful artists. He was not the first or last artist of samurai lineage to cross social boundaries and devote himself to a career in popular culture, but his work is distinguished by an air of grace and decorum originating partly in a steady temperament, partly in the cultural ideals of his background."

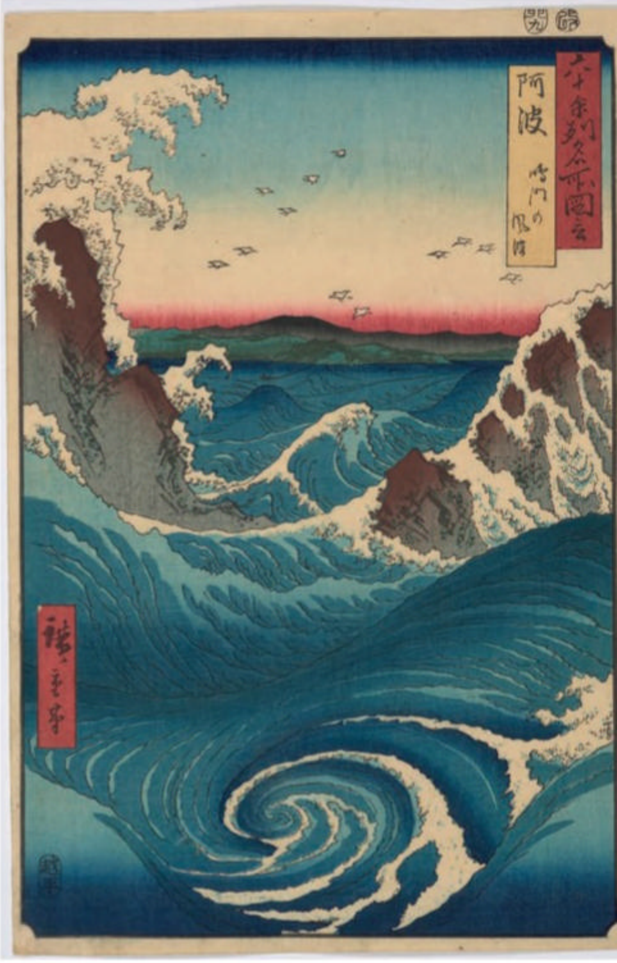
The British Museum's Director, Nicholas Cullinan, adds, "His subjects range from fashionable figures and inviting city scenes to calm landscapes and lively studies of plants and animals." Importantly though, "It was ultimately his facility with the brush and skill with colour that underpinned his tremendous success. Consulting closely with publishers, block-cutters and printers, he achieved special effects that make his prints seem like miniature paintings."

Hiroshige's career ran parallel with the final decades of Japan's Edo period, a time witnessing significant change. As the outside world and modernity hovered, Hiroshige's tranquil artistic vision helped perpetuate a sense of stability and hope. Haft explains the context: "It was an unsettled time of prosperity, then famine, then social retrenchment and finally incursions by foreign warships into Japanese waters. Hiroshige's work, however, shows no sign of turbulence. A great colourist, he found a subtle lyricism in the experience of travel as well as a bond between people and the natural world. Rather than gritty realities or exaggerated fantasies, he captured a quietly optimistic vision and remained committed to that, making it widely accessible to people of his time and of ours."

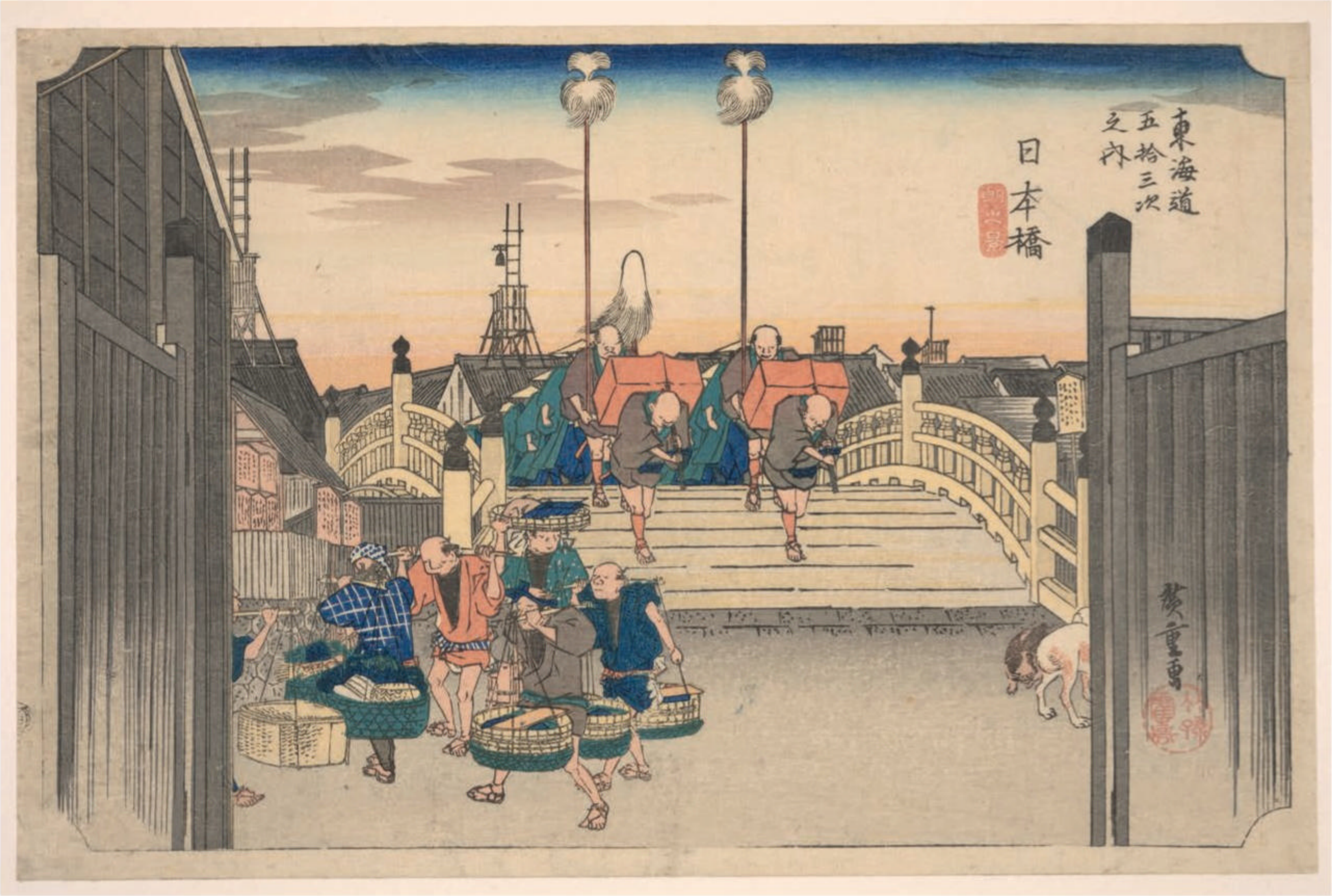
Hiroshige notably interpreted everything through the lens of everyday experience, rather than through literary or historical significance, this approach lending prints broad appeal, and allowing the public to feel emotionally involved with their native landscape. His prolific work often reflected the changing seasons and encompassed every medium, namely illustrated books, paintings and, predominantly, thousands of colour woodblock prints. These works offered intense aesthetic pleasure and emotional comfort in an age of profound transformation.

As Haft makes clear, "He found appreciative

ABOVE *Seba from The 69 Stations of the Kiso*, colour woodblock print, late 1830s **BOTTOM RIGHT** *Awa: The Rough Seas at Naruto fromIllustrated Guide to Famous Places in the 60-odd Provinces*, colour woodblock print, 1855


六十余州名所図会
阿波
鳴門の風波
廣重

COLLECTION OF ALAN MEDAUGH © ALAN MEDAUGH



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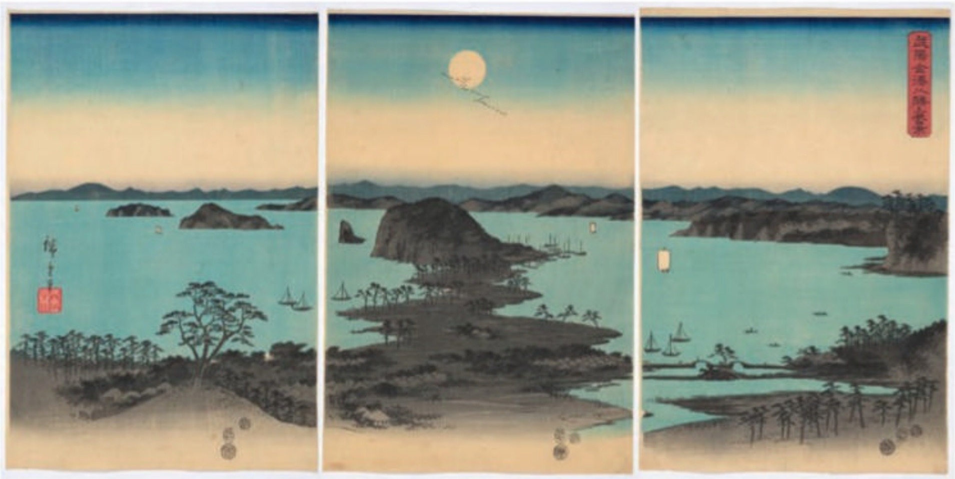

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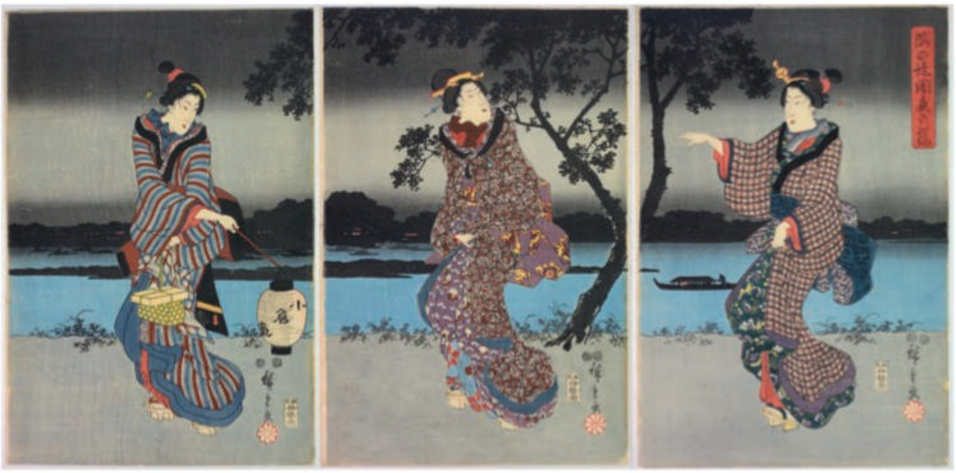
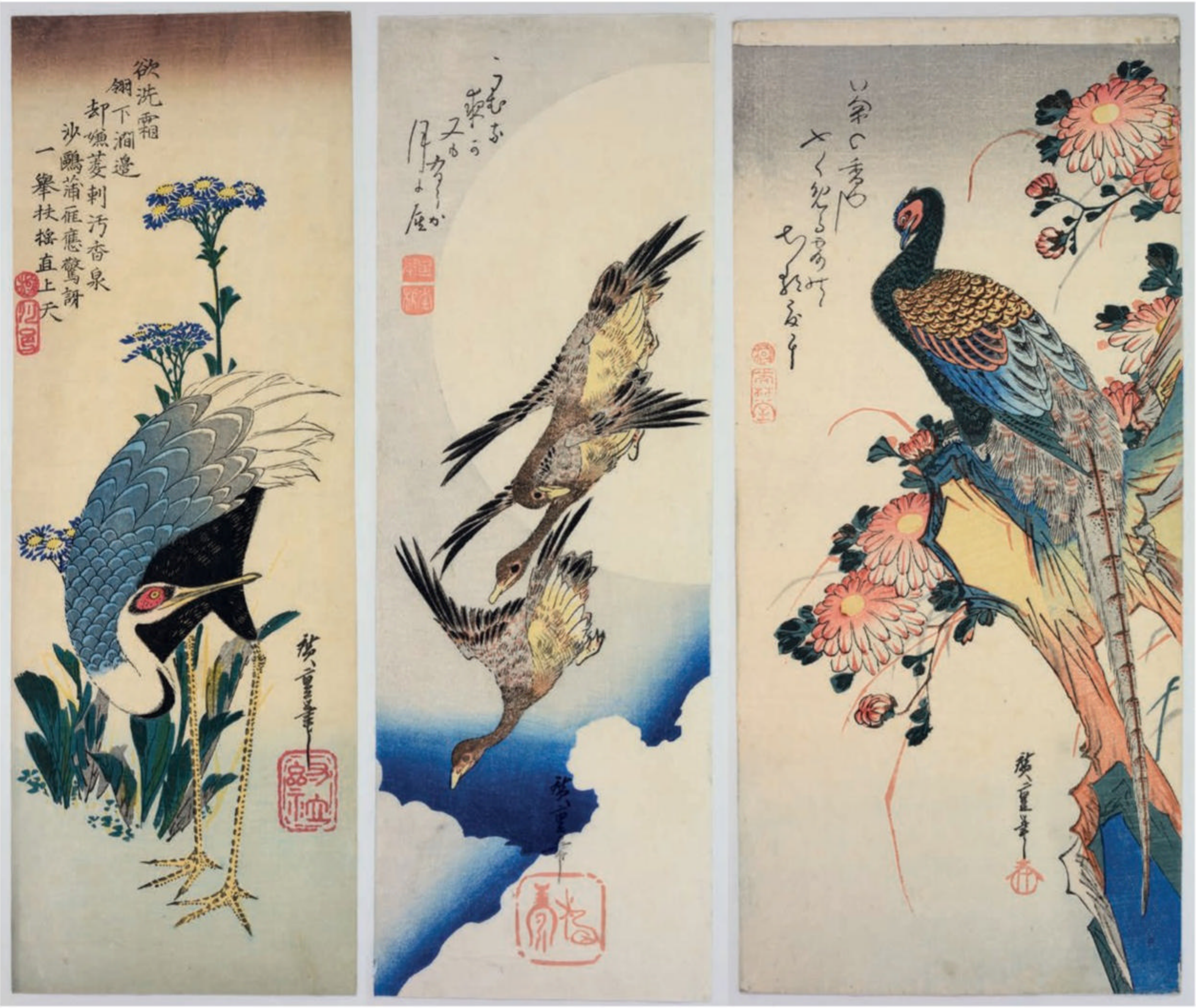


GIFT FROM THE COLLECTION OF ALAN MEDAUGH TO THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM © ALAN MEDAUGH

ABOVE *Nihonbashi – Morning Scene, from The 53 Stations of the Tōkaidō*, colour woodblock print, c. 1833-35 **TOP RIGHT** *Evening View of the Eight Scenic Spots of Kanazawa in Musashi Province*, colour woodblock print, 1857 **BOTTOM RIGHT** *Cherry Blossom on a Moonless Night*, colour woodblock print on triptych, 1847-48

audiences at all levels of society and created a legacy that still inspires today. Artists in Japan and around the world have been learning from Hiroshige's work since the 1860s. His style lived on in Japan through his two leading students, Hiroshige II and Hiroshige III, and in 19th-century Europe, his work won the admiration of Whistler, who incorporated Hiroshige's prints into his paintings." Hiroshige's sumptuous use of colour and unconventional approach to composition witnessed European artists adopting both his vivid colours and themes.

Van Gogh too, famously copied two of Hiroshige's prints in oil; the Japanese artist's influence reflected in van Gogh's use of vibrant yellows and oranges alongside blues. "More recently," Haft says, "Hiroshige's work caught the attention of Julian Opie who's called him his 'artistic hero' and created a series, Japanese Landscapes, in the spirit of Hiroshige's views of rural Japan." He also cites contemporary artists Koya Abe, Emily Allchurch and Sarah Brayer, "who've adapted Hiroshige's imagery and ▸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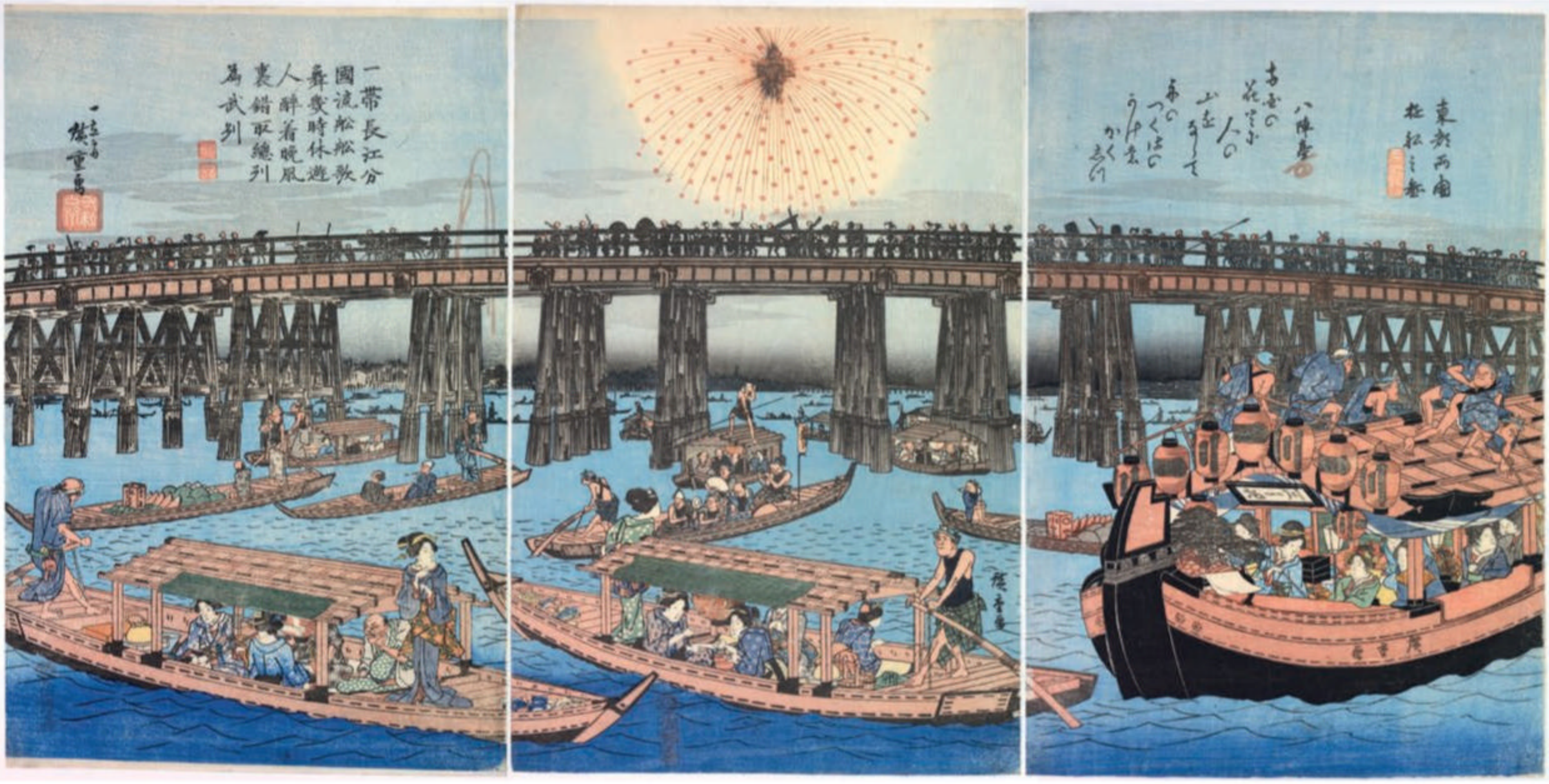
GIFT FROM THE COLLECTION OF ALAN MEDAUGH TO THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM



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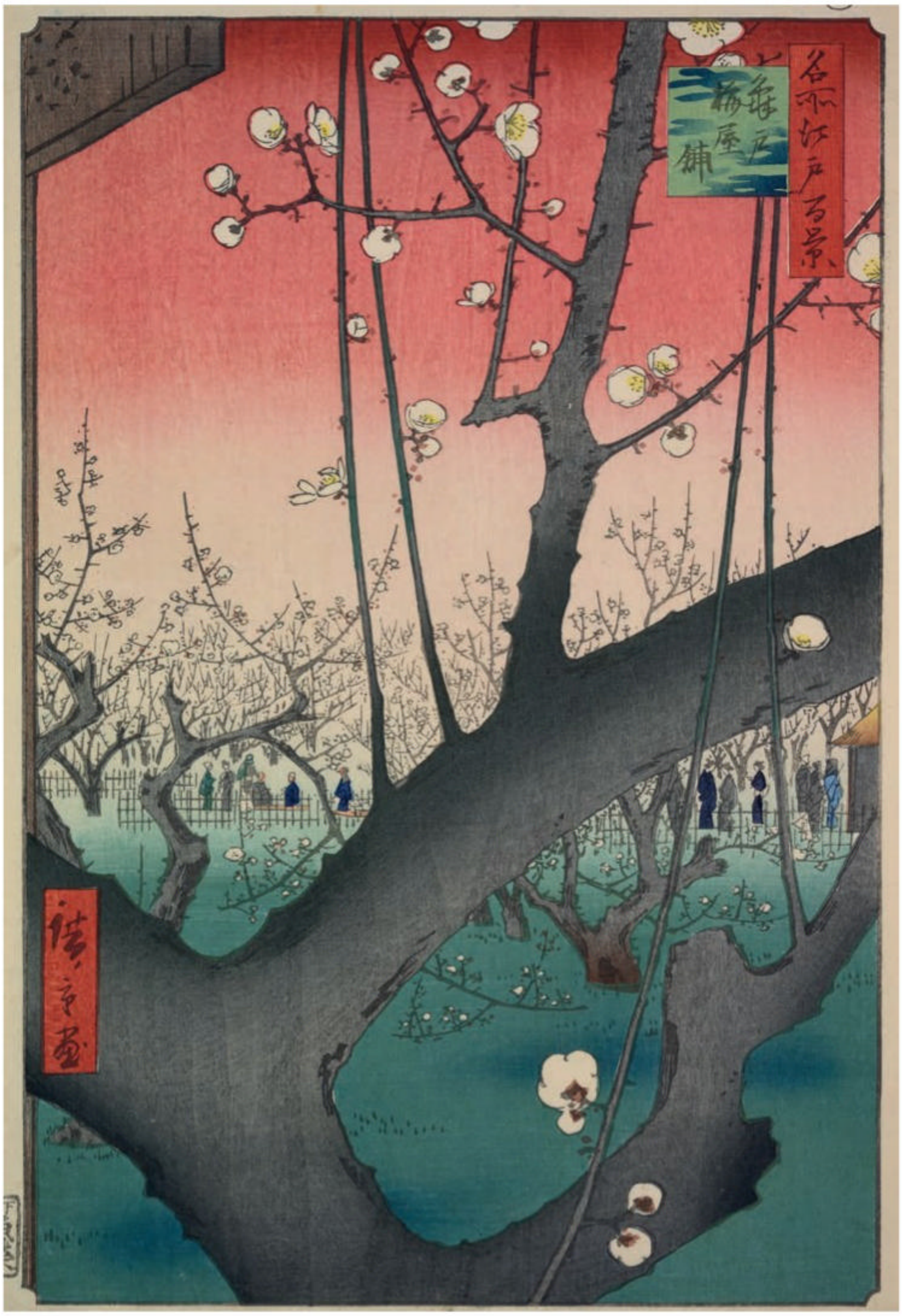
名所江戸百景
亀戸梅屋鋪
廣重画

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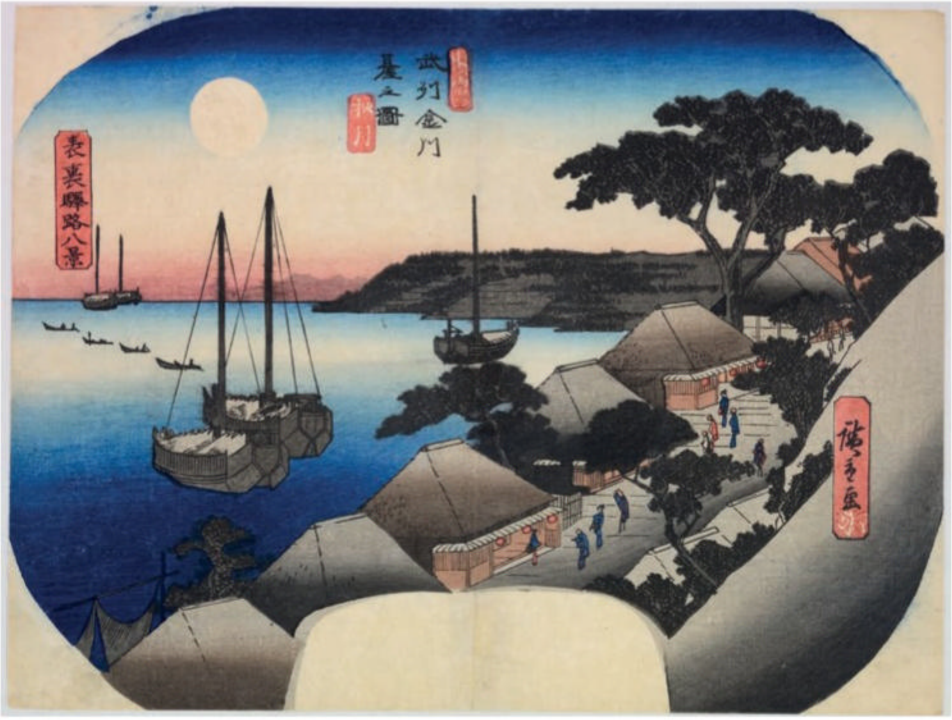

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OPPOSITE PAGE: *Crane and astersn* (early 1830s) *[left] Three geese and full moon* (early 1830s) *[centre] Pheasant and chrysanthemums* (early 1830s) *[right]*, colour woodblock print **BOTTOM** *Pleasure Boats at Ryōgoku in the Eastern Capital*, colour woodblock print, 1832-4 **THIS PAGE: TOP** *The Plum Garden at Kameido from 100 Famous Views of Edo*, colour woodblock print, 1857 **BOTTOM** *Tōkaidō Autumn Moon: Restaurants at Kanagawa, Musashi Province*, colour woodblock print, about 1839

techniques in creating their own work."

Describing Hiroshige's working practice Haft says, "Over 40 years, Hiroshige designed prints for around 90 different publishers who commissioned work, then supervised production (block-cutting and printing), distribution and sales through a network of print and book shops across Edo and other major cities. Around 1849-51, Hiroshige also produced around 200 hanging scroll paintings commissioned by the samurai lord of Tendo, present-day Yamagata prefecture, in north-central Japan. Commercial work included "designs for around 600 uchiwa prints, intended to be cut out and mounted on an oval frame made of split bamboo. Used for a few days and then discarded, they contributed to the fame cultivated elsewhere through landscape prints."

Of the exhibition's name, Cullinan says, "Hiroshige's work spoke to contemporary fascination with domestic travel, and he captured the rhythm of life on the road perhaps more vividly than any other artist of his time." As Haft adds, "In a basic sense, 'open road' refers to one of Hiroshige's main subjects: life along the Tōkaidō [the road connecting Edo, the new capital, with Kyoto, site of the imperial court] and other rural thoroughfares. It also refers to the open, inclusive spirit in which Hiroshige seems to have designed landscape views, as they generally encompass travellers, locals, and people from all ranks of society. This spirit lends his work a timeless feeling. He's perhaps unique among ukiyo-e artists in discovering, amidst Japan's largest and busiest city, a sense of quiet calm is possible."

The exhibition offers a rare opportunity to see the enduring influence of a master craftsman. "Hiroshige's remarkable prints immortalise the unique beauty and culture of Japan, seamlessly blending emotional depth with technical brilliance," emphasises Cullinan. "His influence continues to shape artists worldwide," for, as Haft concludes, "in times of trouble and confusion, Hiroshige the artist-samurai offered people a higher vision, a window on a world of daily life sometimes as it was, but more often as it might be. The strength and coherence of his distinctive vision encourages a similar belief in viewers today."

Hiroshige: Artist of the Open Road is on until 7th September 2025. britishmuseum.org ◻

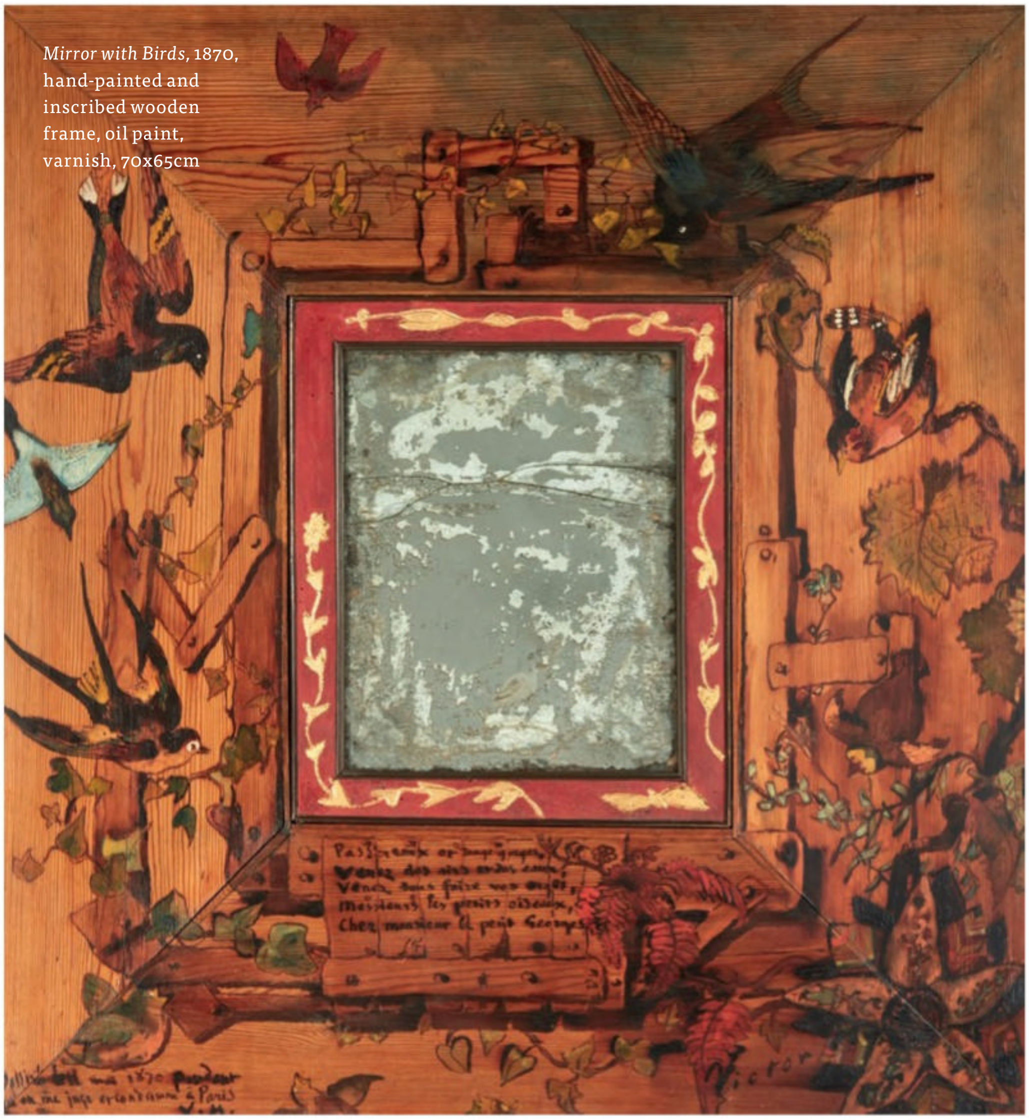
Astonishing things *The drawings of Victor Hugo*

The author of *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was also a prolific artist, producing more than 4,000 drawings in his lifetime. *Amanda Hodges* looks into a new exhibition at the Royal Academy

VICTOR HUGO LOOMS OVER 19TH-CENTURY French literature in the fashion of a true Colossus. Yet, despite such huge literary talent, poet Charles Baudelaire was no less enthusiastic about Hugo's artistic ability when he exalted this lesser-known aspect of the famous writer's craft, vividly hailing, "the magnificent imagination that flows through Victor Hugo's drawings like mysteries in the sky."

Art was something for which Hugo clearly retained deep affection, confiding to a friend late in life, "I would have liked to be; indeed I should have been, a second Rembrandt." His ink and wash visions of fantasy castles, seascapes and monsters amongst other esoteric subjects are, as the Royal Academy attests, fundamentally as "poetic as his writing, yet rarely seen in public."

Now redressing this, the Academy is staging a show focusing entirely on Hugo's drawings on paper, all last exhibited in the UK over 50 years ago. Curator Sarah Lea says, "Admired by Dada and Surrealist artists, Hugo as an artist has inspired later generations including today's Royal Academicians including Tacita Dean and Antony Gormley. Featuring around 70 artworks from European ▶



Mirror with Birds, 1870, hand-painted and inscribed wooden frame, oil paint, varnish, 70x65cm

MAISONS DE VICTOR HUGO, PARIS / GUERNSEY

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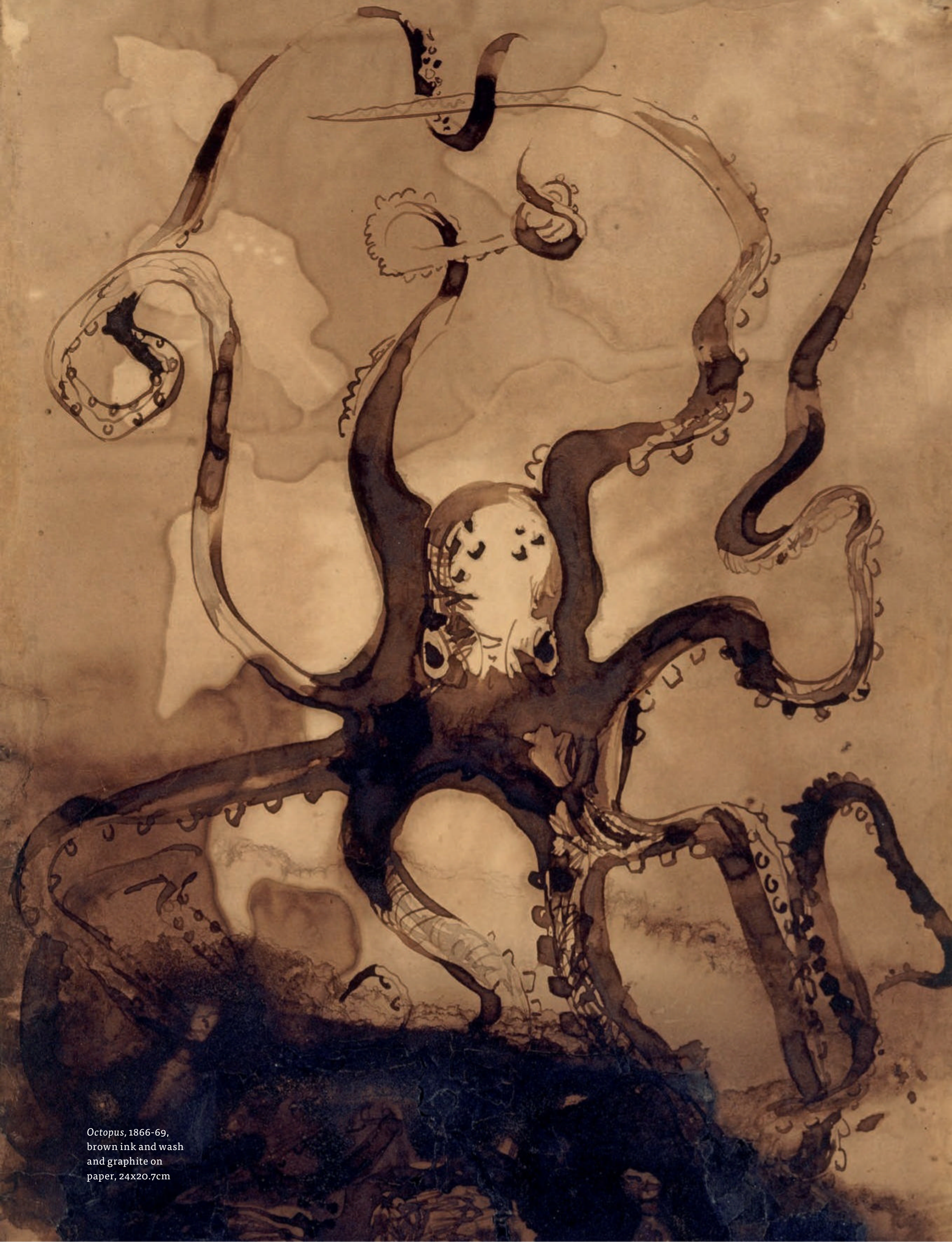
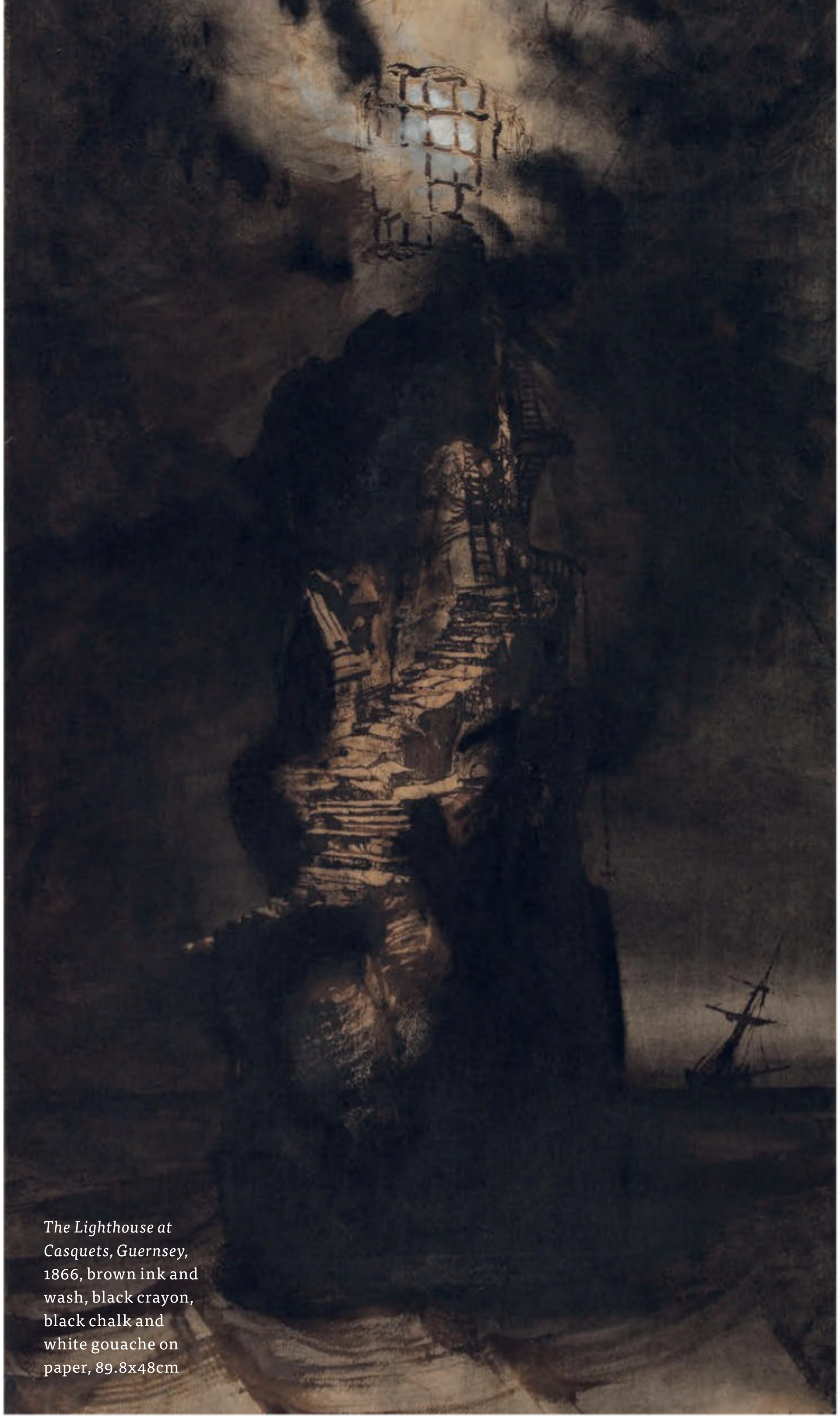
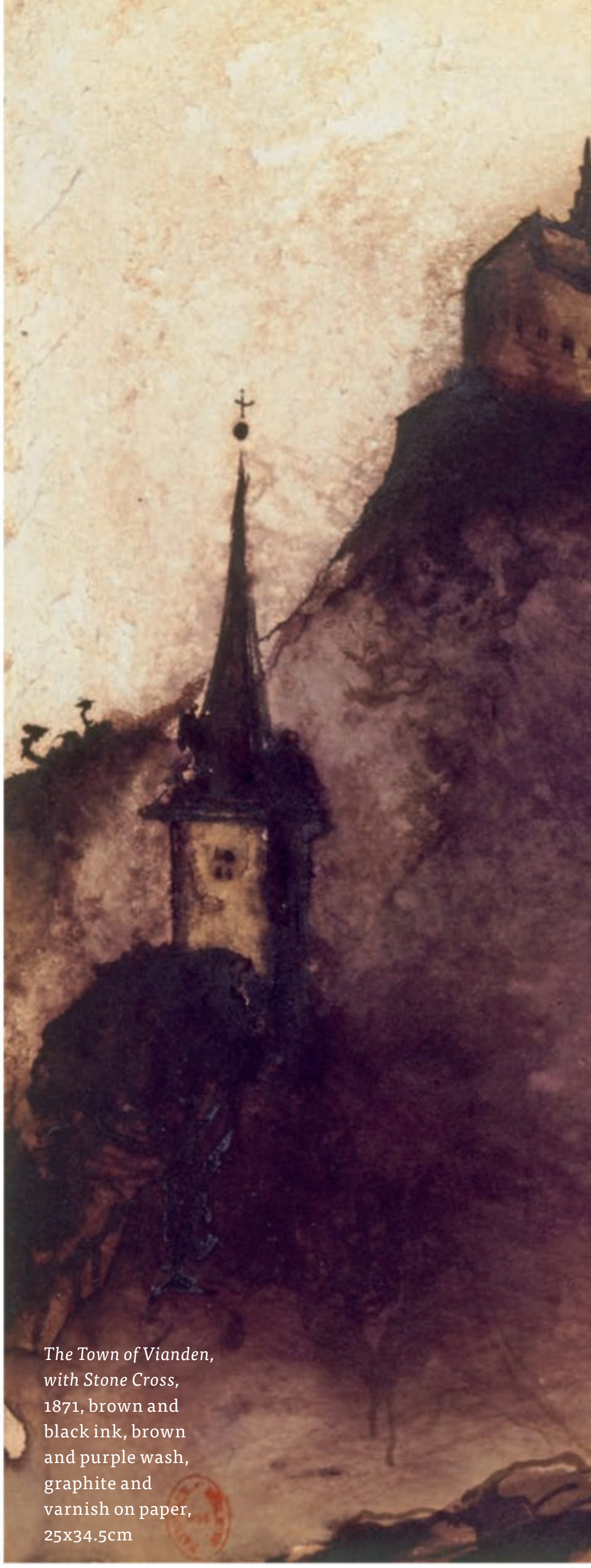


Octopus, 1866-69, brown ink and wash and graphite on paper, 24x20.7cm



The Lighthouse at Casquets, Guernsey, 1866, brown ink and wash, black crayon, black chalk and white gouache on paper, 89.8x48cm

PHOTO: CC0 PARIS MUSÉES / MAISON DE VICTOR HUGO



The Town of Vianden, with Stone Cross, 1871, brown and black ink, brown and purple wash, graphite and varnish on paper, 25x34.5cm

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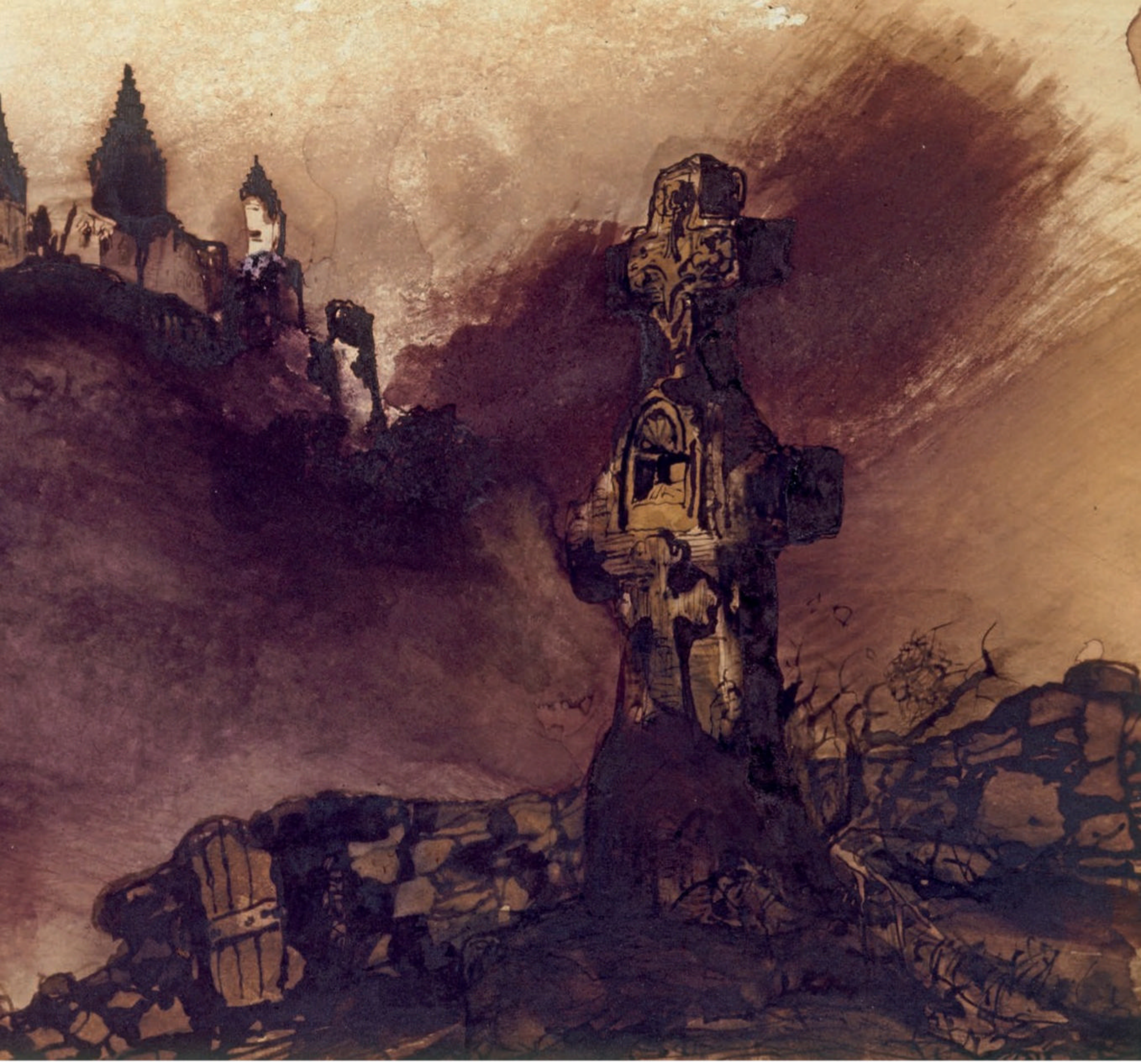
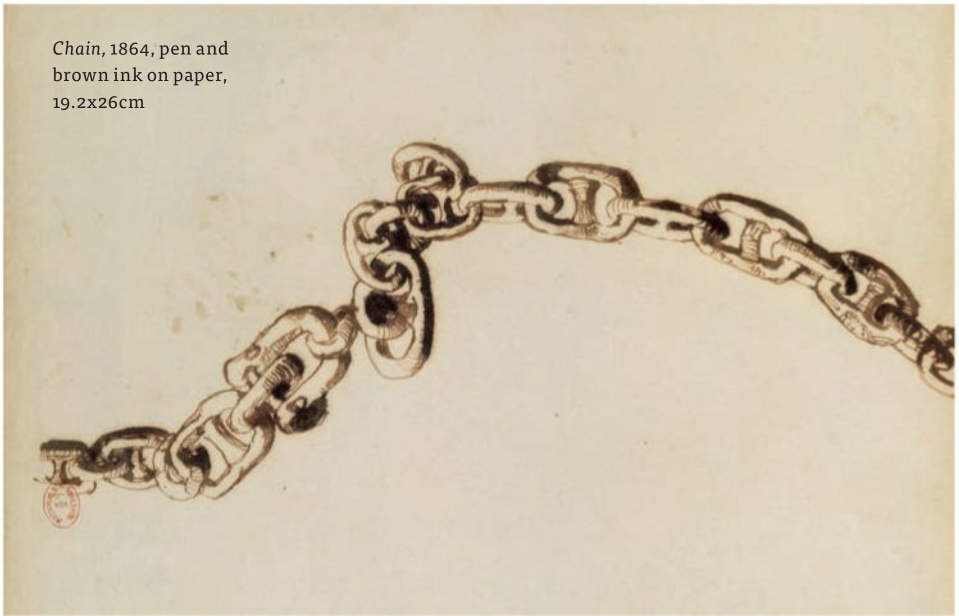
collections, this significant exhibition chronicles every avenue of Hugo's interest in drawing, encompassing early caricatures and travel drawings plus darkly dramatic landscapes and even experiments with abstraction."

Sarah feels that these works "reveal a visual artist of exceptional emotional and technical range, illuminating another facet of Hugo's kaleidoscopic creativity. His beguiling drawings share the drama of his novels and the feeling of his poetry but are typically not directly connected. They're not usually illustrations, but rather imaginative explorations on their own terms." Fellow French writer Theophile Gautier once declared, "If Victor Hugo were not a poet, he'd be a top-notch painter: in fierce, sombre fantasies, he excels in blending the chiaroscuro of Goya with the architectural terror of Piranesi."

Hugo drew on a small scale, employing dark brown or black pen-and-ink wash, sometimes with touches of white; seldom using colour. Sarah explains why these drawings have been overlooked. "In his lifetime, Hugo's novels were usually illustrated by others, drawing a private pursuit, shared with family and close friends. The first public exhibition was in Paris in 1888, three years after his death. Although some drawings were reproduced as prints during his lifetime, these were more conventional landscapes or related to his role as a public figure. For example, Ecce Lex depicting a hanged man (inspired by the execution of abolitionist John Brown) was made in protest against the death penalty, which Hugo publicly opposed."

His books *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* achieved international renown and, after prolonged exile in the Channel Islands, for many Hugo epitomised the French Republic ideals of equality and freedom, his causes encompassing the abolition of slavery, universal suffrage and penal reform. Such a prominent profile inevitably brought





Chain, 1864, pen and brown ink on paper, 19.2x26cm

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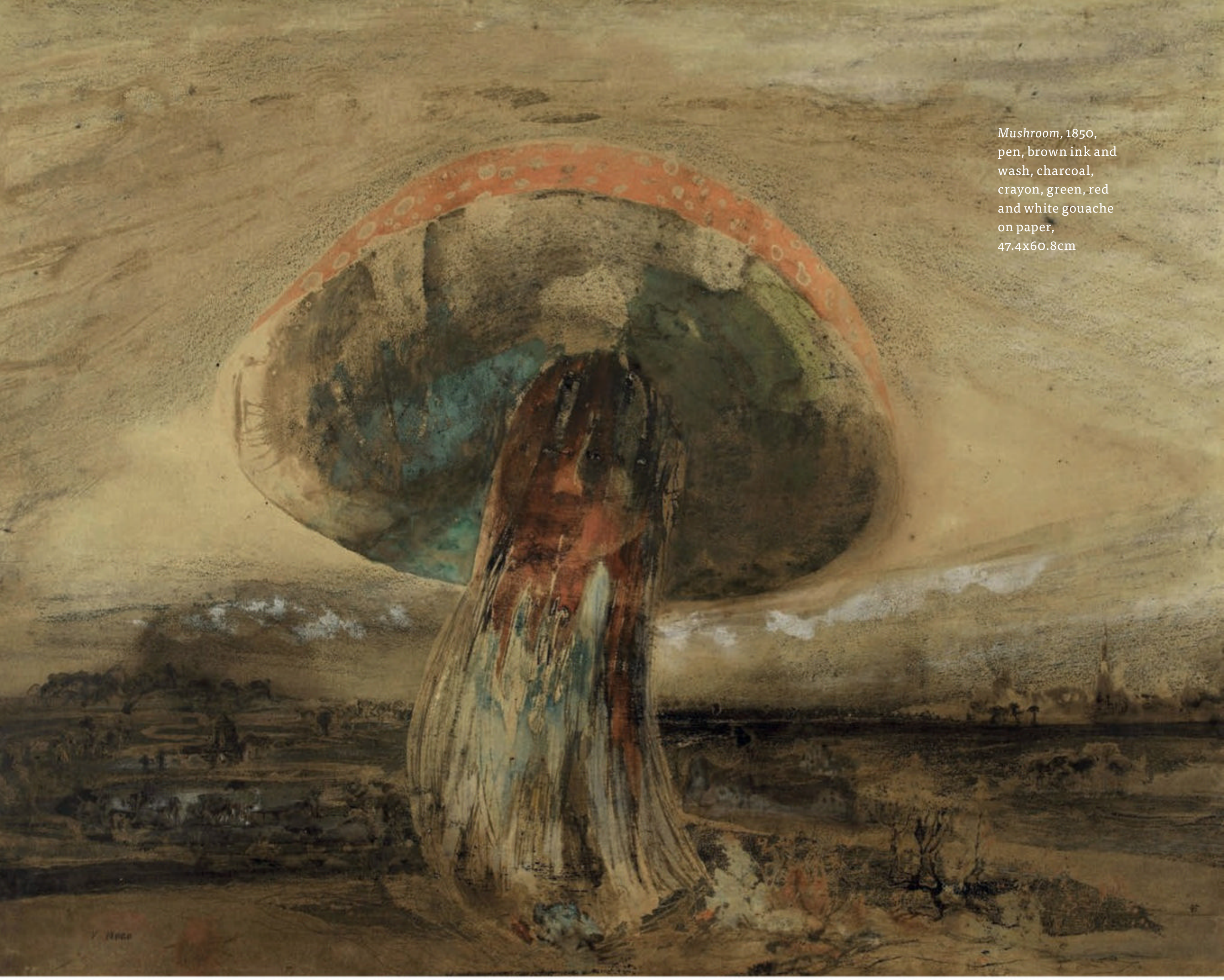
responsibility, and drawing seems to have offered considerable solace.

"During his exile, influenced by spiritualism and inspired by immersion in the natural landscapes and seascapes of Guernsey, Hugo became increasingly interested in unconscious creativity," says Sarah. "In a rare 1863 public statement, he described 'hours of almost unconscious reverie' drawing; it's clear he was at times compelled to draw. The activity afforded freedom of thought, a place of freewheeling memory and imagination and, as parallel creative processes, writing and drawing enriched one another." This symbiosis of two complementary disciplines was something that van Gogh shared, ▸

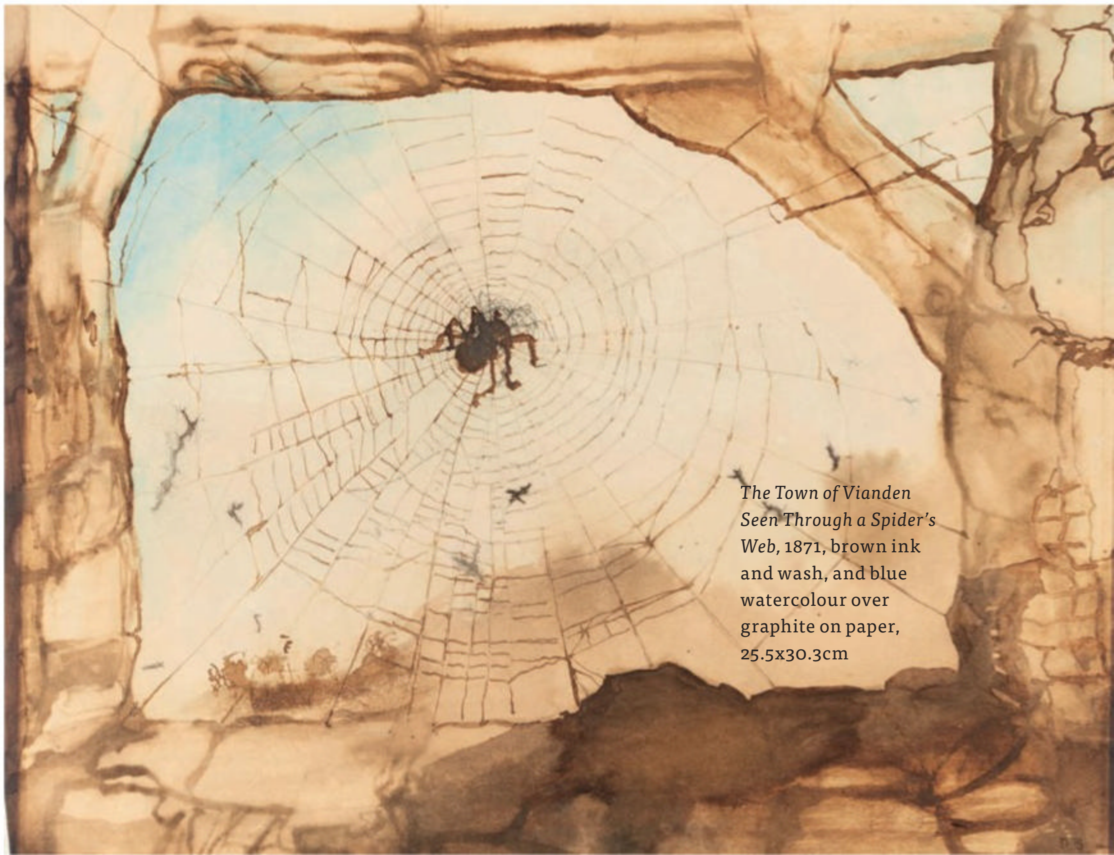


Mushroom, 1850, pen, brown ink and wash, charcoal, crayon, green, red and white gouache on paper, 47.4x60.8cm

describing Hugo's oeuvre as offering "astonishing things," a description aptly lending its name to the new exhibition.

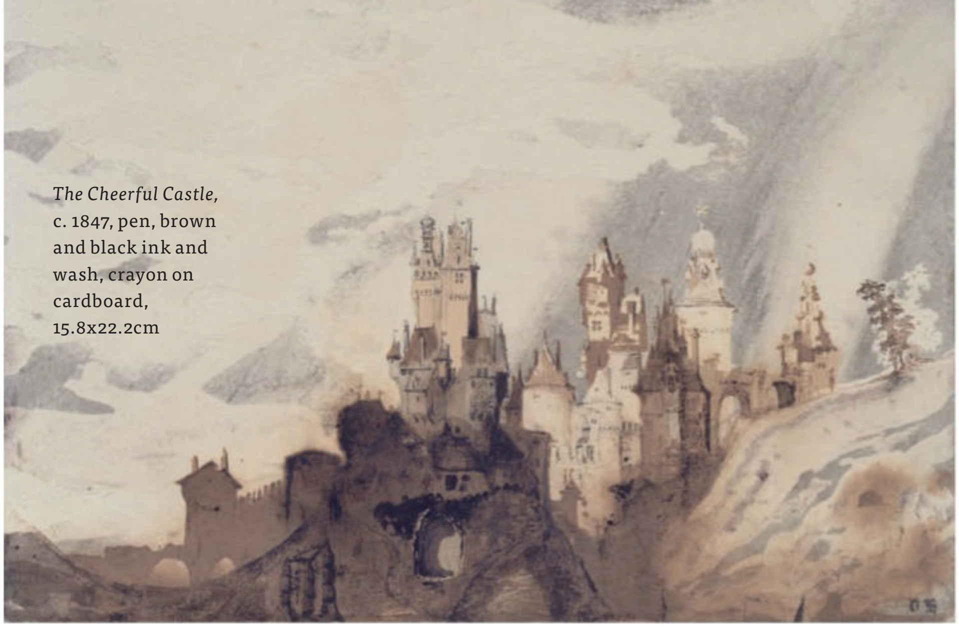
The show has taken time to bring to fruition. "It's been in the planning since 2019, a rare chance to see these works because the inks and papers are so fragile to light exposure that, once exhibited, they must be kept in the dark for an extended period," explains Sarah. "Few in the UK realise that Hugo created over 4,000 drawings, many produced during his 19-year exile, first in Jersey then Guernsey, where he also remodelled and created the elaborate, decorative interiors of [his home] Hauteville House."

Hugo had taken refuge in the Channel Islands after the diplomatic coup of Napoleon III, whom he opposed. Here both art and literature sustained him. "Hugo drew throughout his life. As a young man, he produced many caricatures and continued to return to this mode of drawing with fantastical, figures later in life," says Sarah.



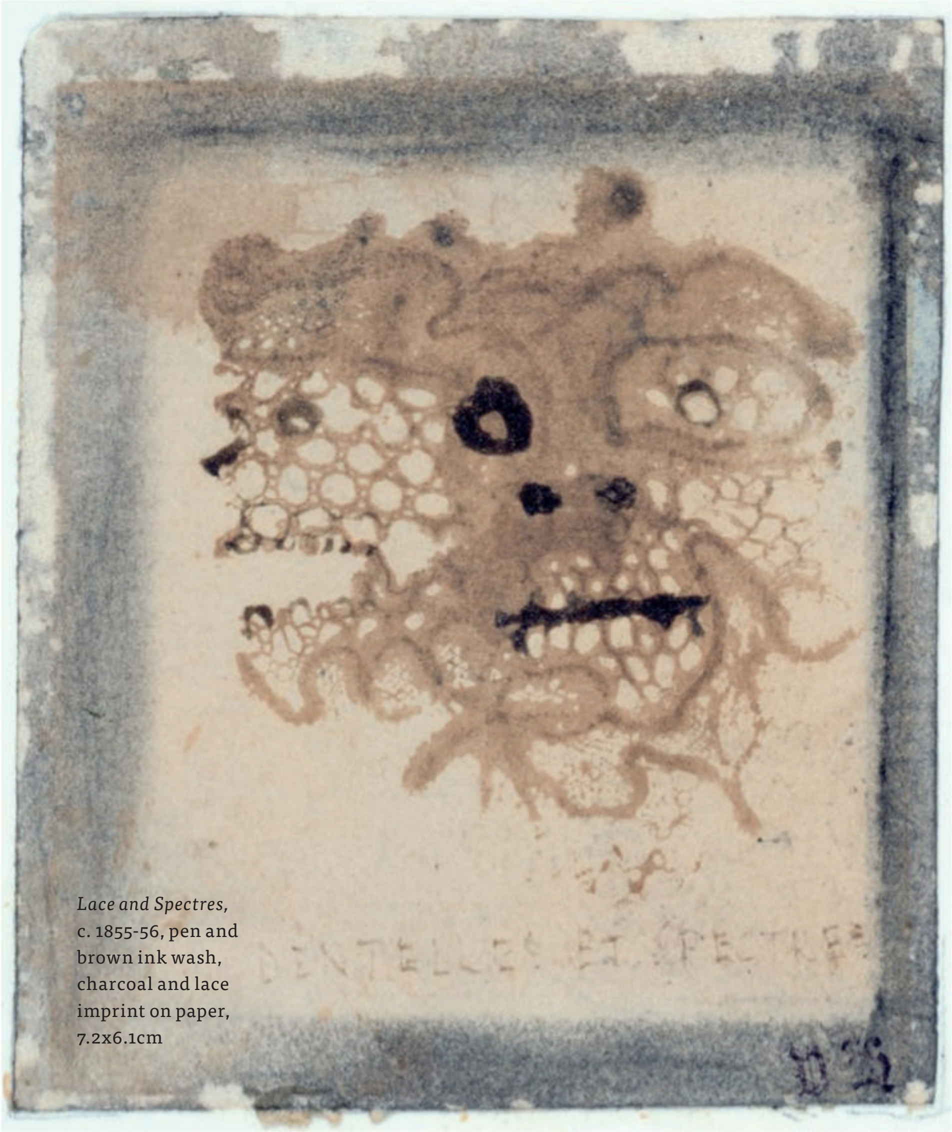
The Town of Vianden Seen Through a Spider's Web, 1871, brown ink and wash, and blue watercolour over graphite on paper, 25.5x30.3cm

CCØ PARIS MUSÉES / MAISONS DE VICTOR HUGO



The Cheerful Castle, c. 1847, pen, brown and black ink and wash, crayon on cardboard, 15.8x22.2cm

MAISONS DE VICTOR HUGO, PARIS / GUERNSEY



Lace and Spectres, c. 1855-56, pen and brown ink wash, charcoal and lace imprint on paper, 7.2x6.1cm

MAISONS DE VICTOR HUGO, PARIS / GUERNSEY

X CCØ PARIS MUSÉES / MAISONS DE VICTOR HUGO

"During the 1840s, he developed technical skills in observational drawing and perspective while documenting travels along the Rhine, within France and the Pyrenees. Hugo's original approach to drawing landscape and architecture and enchantment with times of day like dusk and dawn led him to use experimental materials and processes to achieve atmospheric effects. This gradually led to him developing ambitious compositions such as *Le Tour des Rats*;" a work drawn in graphite pencil and charcoal where valley, sky and sea emerge in monochrome.

Sarah reveals, "In 1850, Hugo produced a series of large-scale works that appear today as strikingly modern but arise from a specific moment of upheaval," namely on the cusp of exile. She cites "The enigmatic *Mushroom* together with *The Dead City and Hic Clavis*, alias porta works of intense expressive power and the starkly abstract *Taches-Planètes*. In such drawings, materials take on a life of their own – rubbed charcoal, poured ink with organically formed patterns used in combination with techniques known today (following employment by 1920's surrealist artists) as automatic drawing, decalcomania and frottage."

What were his subjects? "Although Hugo produced many different types of drawing on his primary subject of nature – birds, mountains, trees, rocks, octopus, [and particularly] the ocean – he was equally fascinated by man-made structures, human history and the passage of time," says Sarah. "Hugo somehow embeds these themes in the material processes he uses; for instance, making imprints using lace, seen in Lace and Spectres, or manipulating ink to move quickly on the paper, or to dry slowly to leave concentric tide marks." He was long fascinated by dramatic castles or towers and steeples often silhouetted against turbulent skies, *The Cheerful Castle* and its sunlit background being a rare exception. "A hallmark of Hugo's drawings is this quality of metamorphosis," using whatever materials lay at hand. Perhaps, "a tree root transforms into a skull, a windmill sprouts from a cottage, or the power of suggestion of an ink blot is elaborated just enough to engage the viewer's imagination. Hugo's fusion of observation, imagination and reality make these works on paper highly original and constantly surprising."

His artwork retains contemporary topicality Sarah asserts. "We glimpse the workings of a tirelessly curious mind that sought to address universal human questions. It's the humanity and relevance of Hugo's thought that makes him of interest now. Amid the aftermath of Brexit, we can ponder Hugo's proposal of a United States of Europe in 1840 and his premonition of a great war; amid chaos, he represented a belief in future peace. The contrast between this optimistic public persona and the haunting, sometimes bleak drawings, reveals something of the cathartic nature of drawing for Hugo."

As Sarah concludes, "Drawing is for artists the fundamental process of generating ideas and so it's no surprise many feel a direct connection to these immediate works on paper. The same is true for the general visitor too; drawing is something we all do, as children at least, and it's Hugo's ability to infuse such a simple, timeless act, conducted on relatively small sheets of paper, with the mystery and vast dimensions of his imagination, that makes these drawings feel like some kind of alchemy."

Astonishing Things: The Drawings of Victor Hugo, on until 29 June 2025. royalacademy.org.uk □

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO PAINT AND CREATE

LAURA JONES, British Art Club member and former finalist of The British Art Club, has been working professionally as an illustrator and designer for the last 20 years. Here, she shares her tips on coloured pencil drawing

1

Use layers

Coloured pencil is a very slow medium to work with, but I think that makes it relaxing. If you want to create depth in your drawings, build up the colours slowly with lots of layers, and as you add new elements to the drawing, go back and look at the areas you have already done and see if the colours need to be changed as you go along.

2

Ask for advice

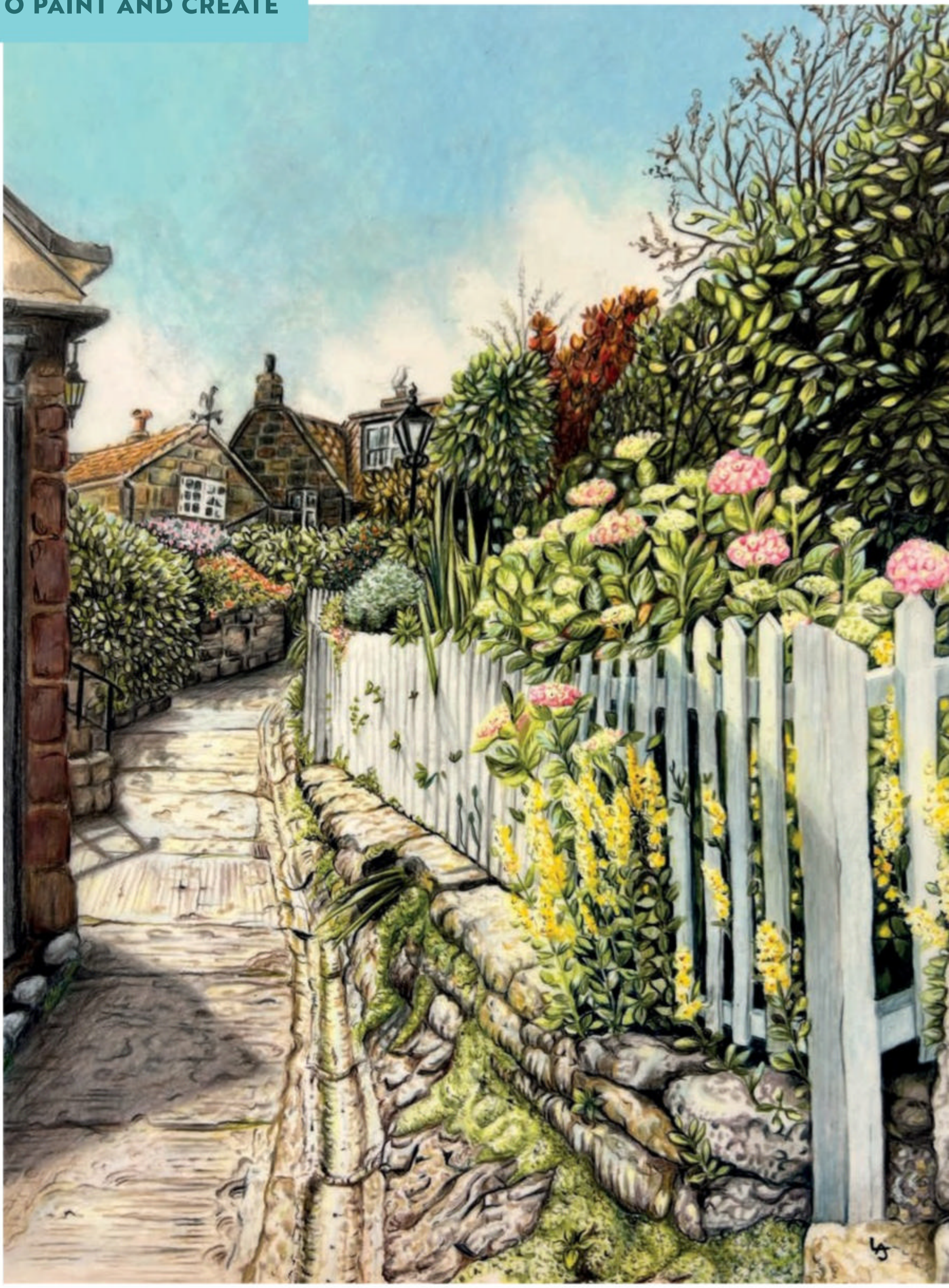
As an artist, I'm always learning, and other artists are generally very happy to share their working processes and ideas. Visit local art exhibitions and speak to the artist exhibiting. You could also join a community like the UK Coloured Pencil Society, full of like-minded artists happy to share tips and advice.

3

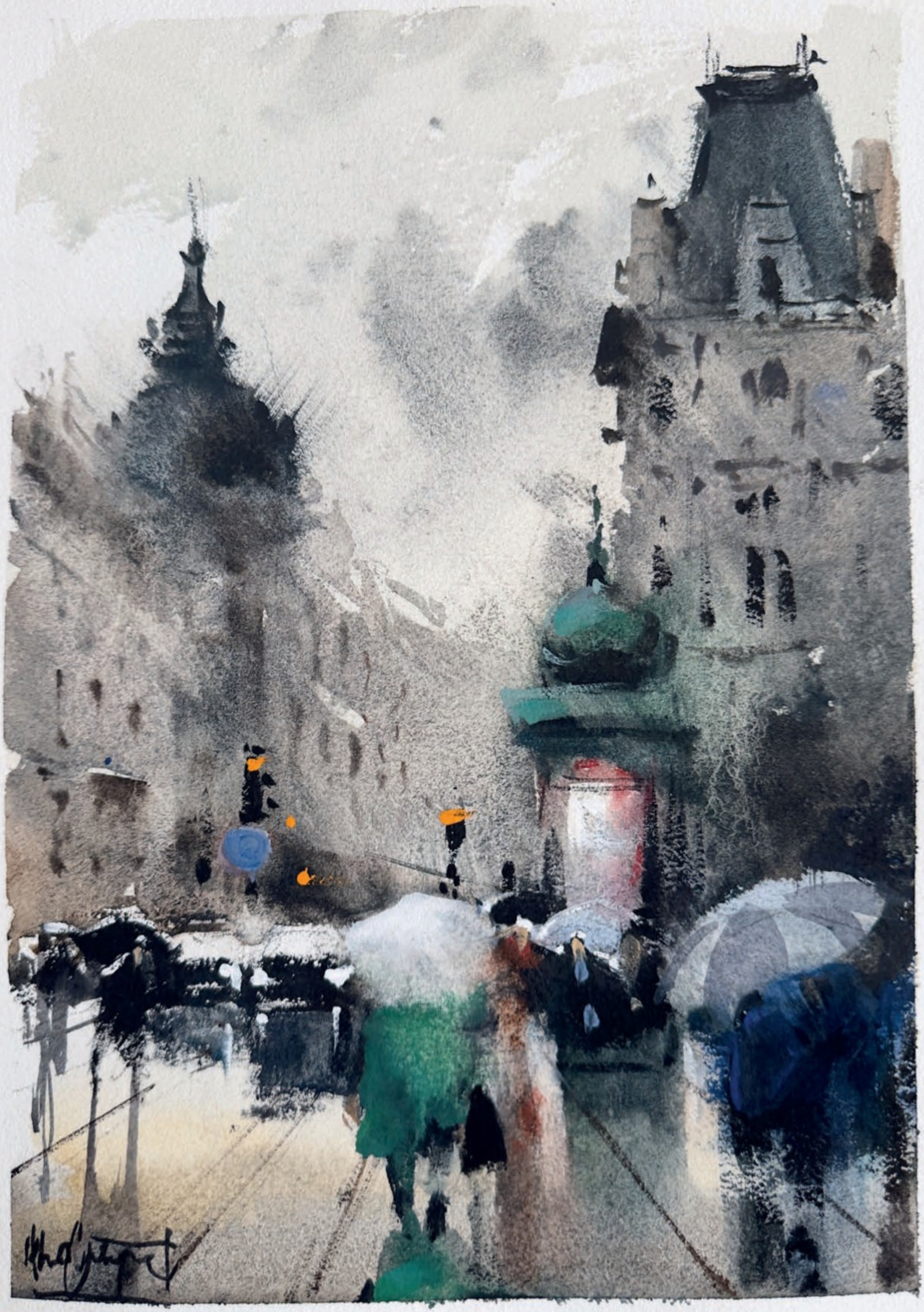
Be seen

If you're a brilliant artist, but no one knows about you, you won't sell any work. Take part in art fairs, share your work regularly on social media, and share other hobbies so people can meet the person behind the art, too. It all helps to get your name, and your work out there.

laurajones-illustration.uk
Instagram: @laura_jones □

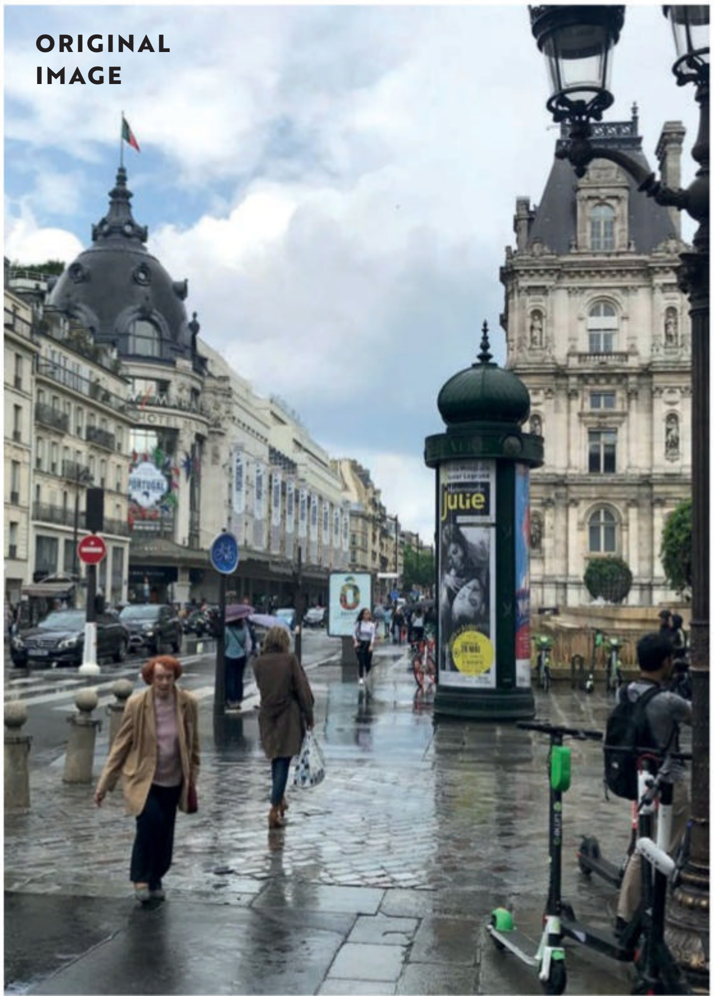


THE PATH FROM THE BAY, COLOURED PENCIL, 25CMX29CM



Mastering edges in watercolour

In his fourth and final instalment on working with watercolour, the master of the craft **ALVARO CASTAGNET**, talks about the importance of edges



EDGES ARE THE UNSUNG HEROES OF WATERCOLOUR. They help create a dynamic and rhythmic painting, and it is paramount to manipulate them well because edges can create so many different effects. In this step-by-step demonstration, I will show you how to bring the scene of a bustling Parisian street to life, using edges to blend, separate and emphasise key elements. We explore how to combine sharp and soft edges in harmony to create a dynamic and flowing rhythm in the painting.

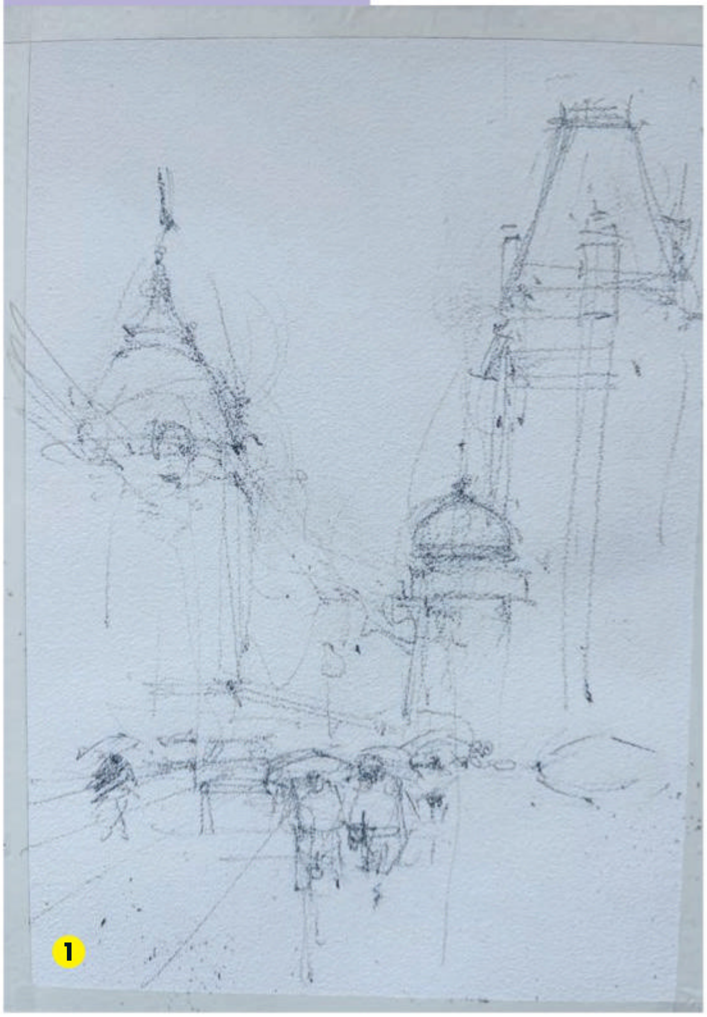
alvarocastagnet.net ▸

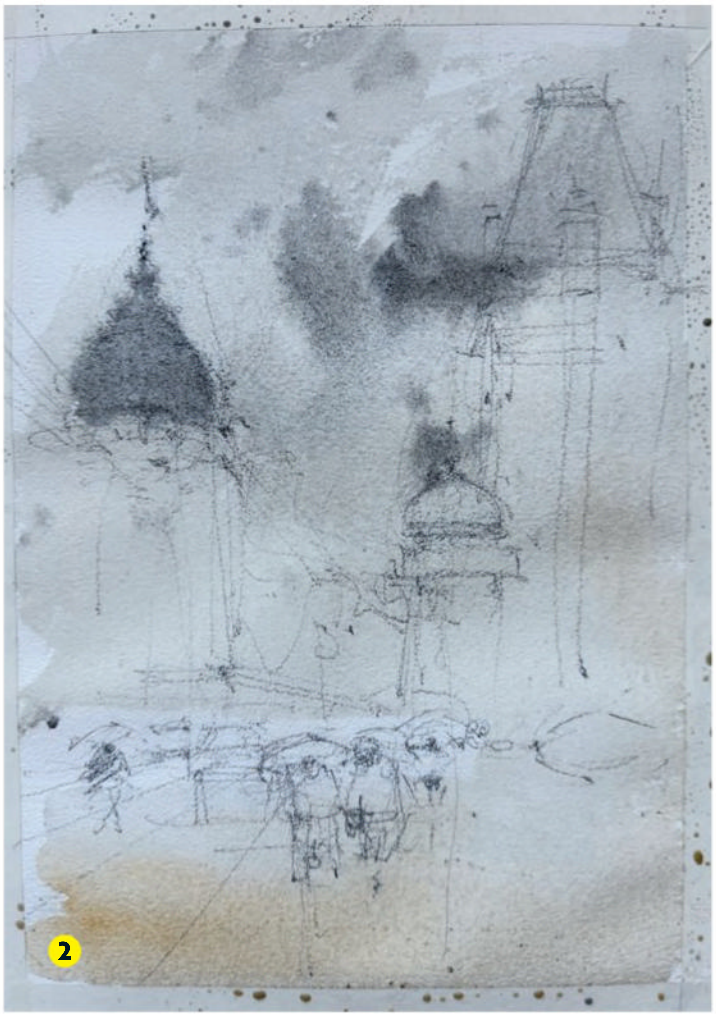
ALVARO'S MATERIALS

Watercolour Paints
Al Fresco Grey, Yellow Ochre, Cobalt Blue, Burnt Sienna Light, Lunar Black, Viridian and a touch of Pyrrol Orange.

Brushes
Mop brush #6, fine round brush a small synthetic one for details and signing.

Support
Arches 300gsm rough paper
4B pencil
Sponge
A light board and masking tape.





1 SKETCHING THE SCENE

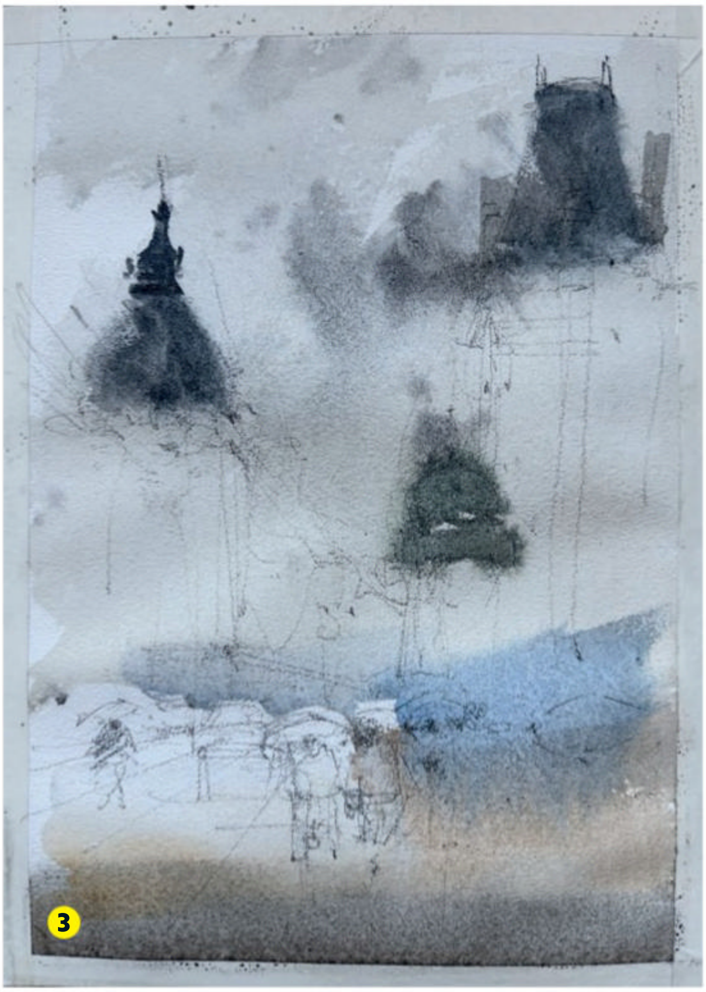
Start with a loose 4B pencil sketch to outline the major shapes and establish a sense of scale in the composition. Pay special attention to defining the cupolas, the kiosk and the figures with umbrellas, which will later become focal points. The sketch provides the framework for where soft, hard and lost edges will be placed.

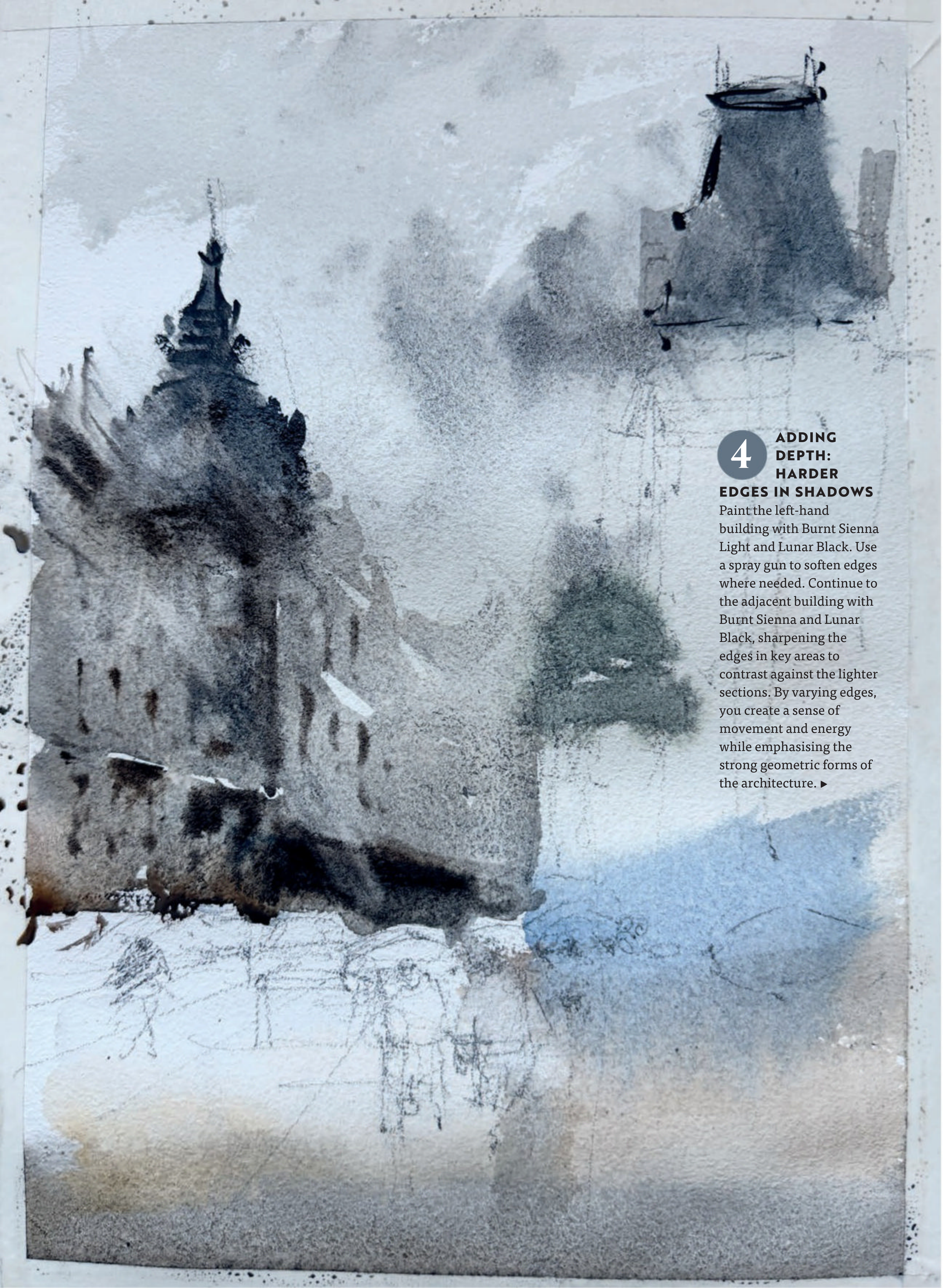
2 INITIAL WASHES AND SOFT TRANSITIONS

Wet the paper thoroughly and lay down a wash of Al Fresco Grey and Yellow Ochre in the lower areas of the scene. I used Lunar black and Al Fresco Grey on the sky, leaving gaps to create clouds and continuing with the same wash adding Yellow Ochre to create warmth. I then left some untouched paper around the umbrellas and figures' heads to preserve highlights. Work wet-on-wet to create soft transitions, allowing the colours to flow naturally into one another. These early washes establish a luminous foundation, with blurred edges suggesting depth and atmosphere.

3 REFINING THE CUPOLAS: CONTROLLED SOFTNESS

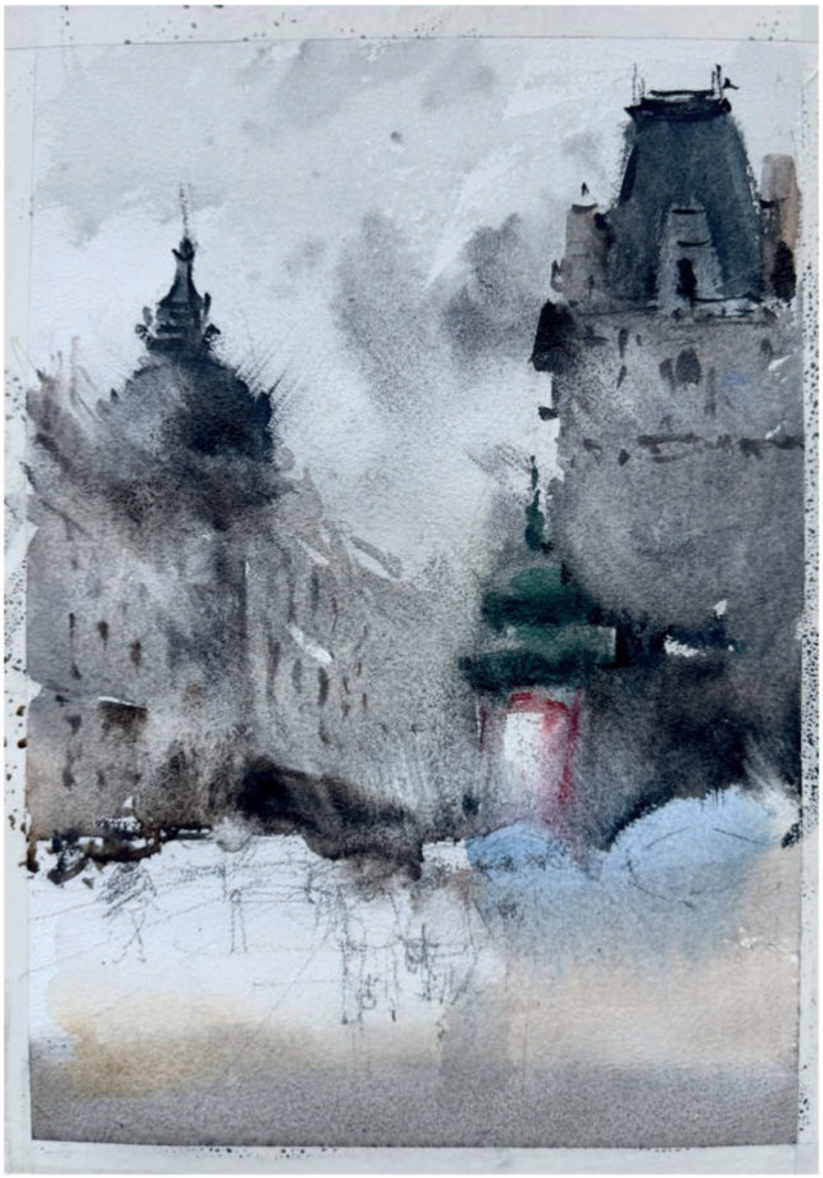
Continue with Al Fresco Grey on the cupolas, adding subtle definition while maintaining soft edges. Let the paint flow downward into the initial washes, ensuring the transitions remain smooth and seamless. A Burnt Sienna Light mixed with Lunar Black makes sure the bottom section is strong in value to accentuate light on the pavement. Meanwhile, a single confident stroke of Cobalt Blue as a base for the main umbrella. This step focuses on blending architectural forms into the sky through careful edge control.





4 ADDING DEPTH: HARDER EDGES IN SHADOWS

Paint the left-hand building with Burnt Sienna Light and Lunar Black. Use a spray gun to soften edges where needed. Continue to the adjacent building with Burnt Sienna and Lunar Black, sharpening the edges in key areas to contrast against the lighter sections. By varying edges, you create a sense of movement and energy while emphasising the strong geometric forms of the architecture. ▸

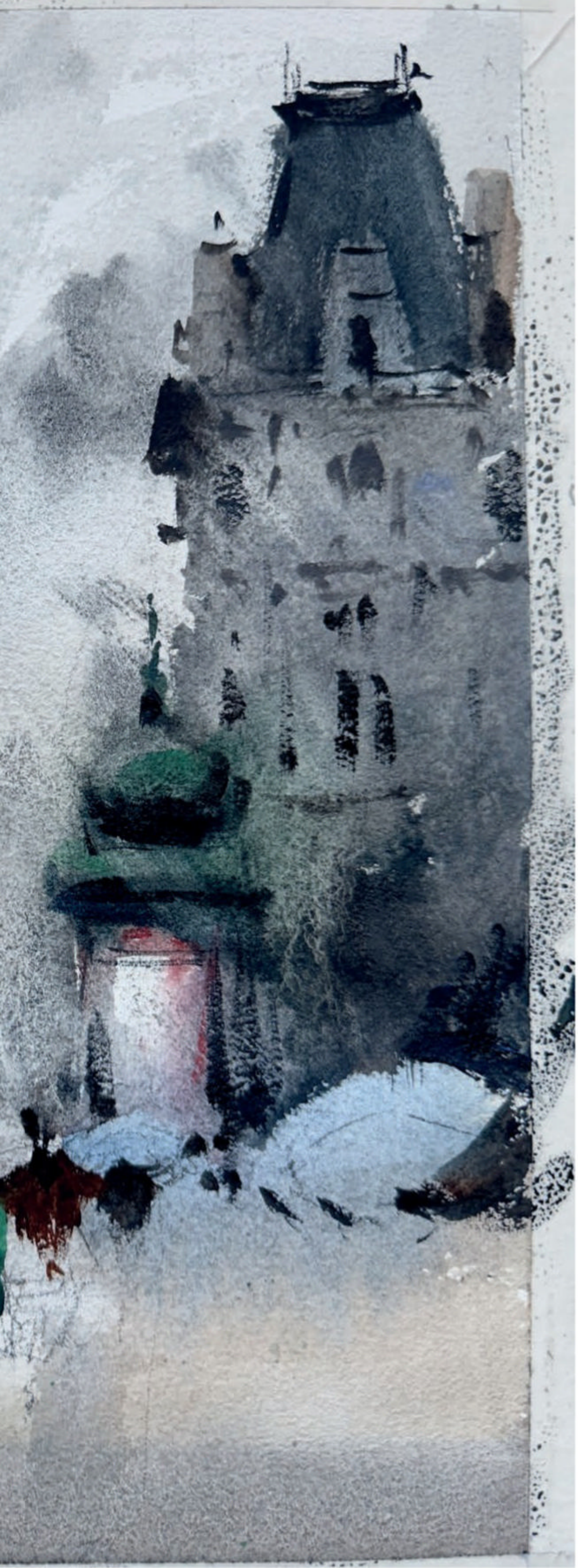


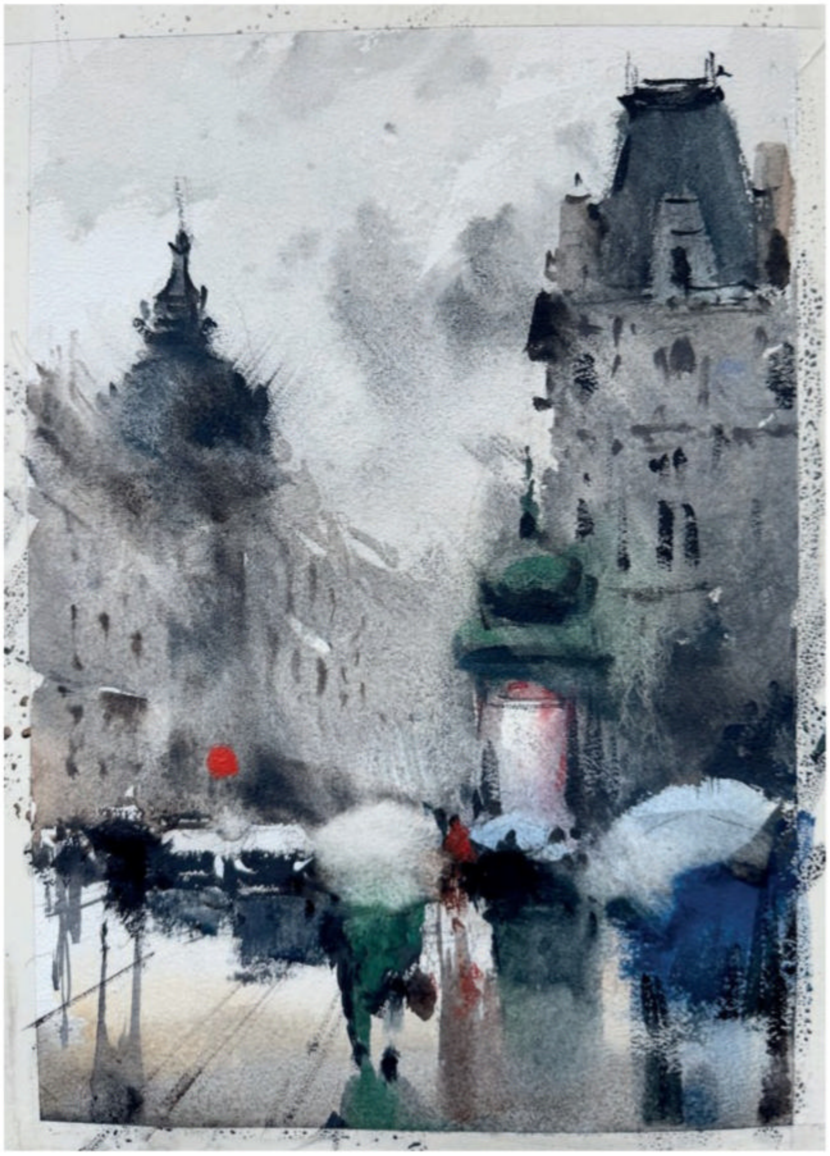
5 THREE-DIMENSIONAL EFFECTS: NEGATIVE SHAPES ▲

Deepen the shadows at the base of the buildings to enhance the perception of light. Use negative painting techniques to define the windshields of cars and intricate details of the French kiosk. Shape the umbrellas using Viridian and Lunar Black, carefully balancing soft and hard edges for realism. This stage is about sculpting shapes and manipulating edges to enhance the painting's three-dimensionality.

6 DEFINING THE MAIN FIGURE: EDGE CONTRAST ▶

Focus on the main figure in green, using Lunar Black and Viridian for clothing. For the figure on the right, apply a mix of Cobalt Blue and Lunar Black. Ensuring hard edges, define the form against soft surroundings, by selectively varying the edges around the figures, they emerge as key focal points within the composition.





7 FINAL TOUCHES: BALANCING WARM AND COOL ▲

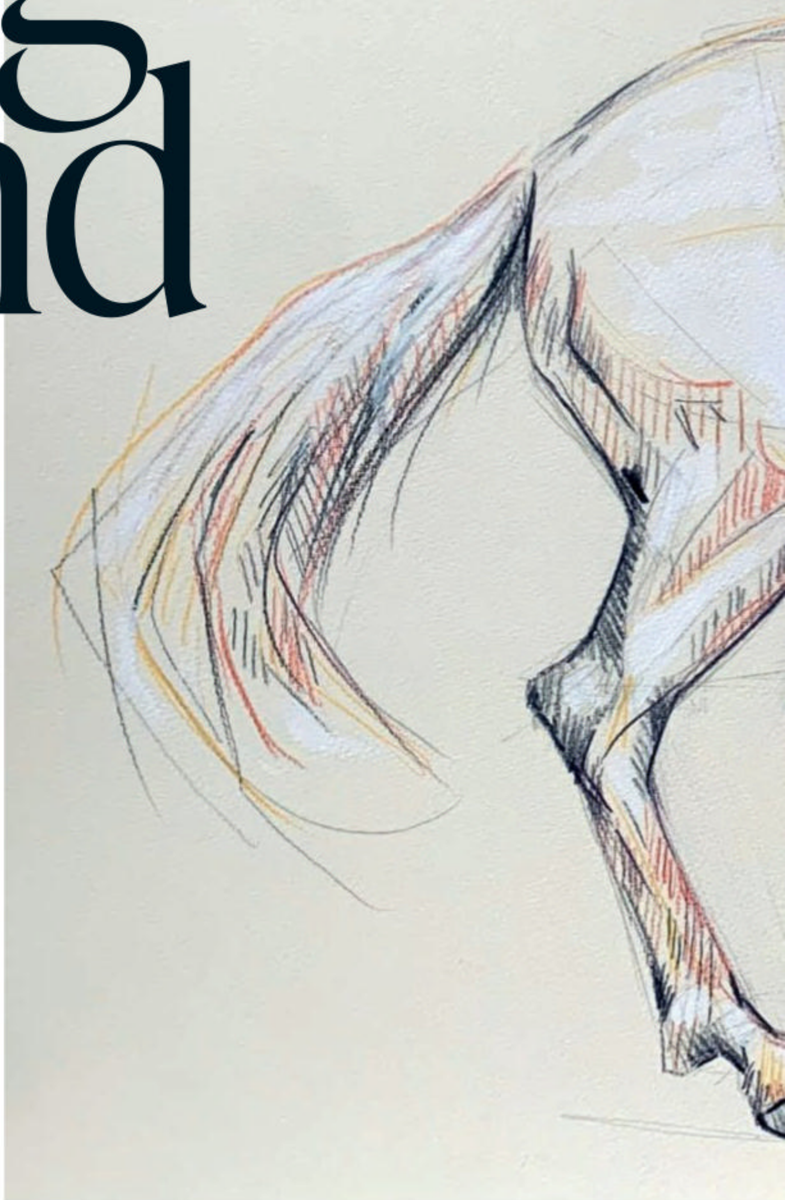
To unify the painting, introduce a touch of Burnt Sienna Light between the figures, harmonising the cooler tones. Add carefully placed hard edges to anchor the composition and guide the viewer's eye. Use small highlights on traffic lights and architectural details to enhance the vibrancy and realism. Maintaining chromatic unity by using a limited colour palette, makes sure of cohesion. These final touches bring the painting together, ensuring a dynamic balance of edges that lead the eye fluidly across the scene. ◻

ALVARO'S FINAL THOUGHTS

Edges are a fundamental tool in watercolour painting. The interplay between soft, hard and lost edges creates rhythm, tension, excitement and dynamic movement to breathe life into a painting. By carefully controlling edges throughout the process, you'll discover the true magic of this medium.

Horsing around

KASHA LUNT is inspired by nature and the animals, especially horses. Here, she draws this majestic creature in coloured pencil



KASHA'S MATERIALS

Derwent Lightfast Pencils
Amber, Scarlett, Dark Indigo, Burnt Sienna, Nightshade

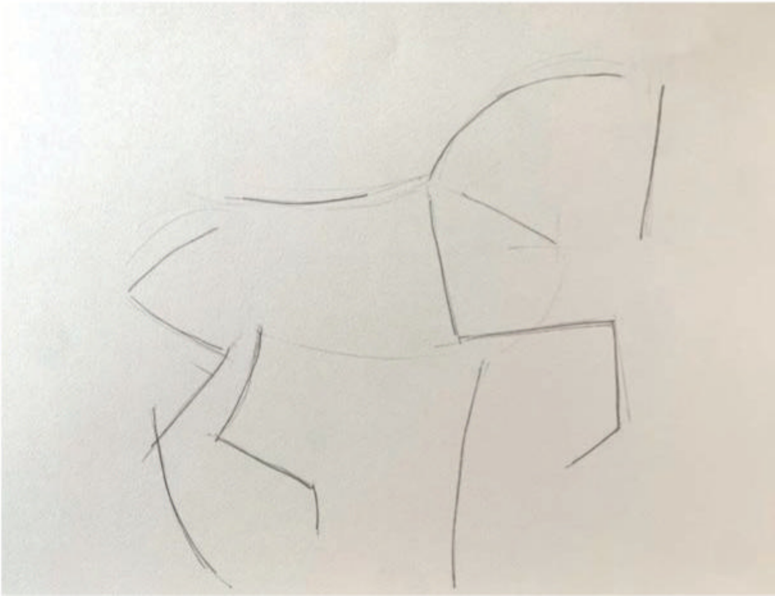
Support
Somerset textured soft white Printmaking paper 76x56cm
2B pencil
Putty rubber
Pencil sharpener
0.5cm square end brush
White acrylic

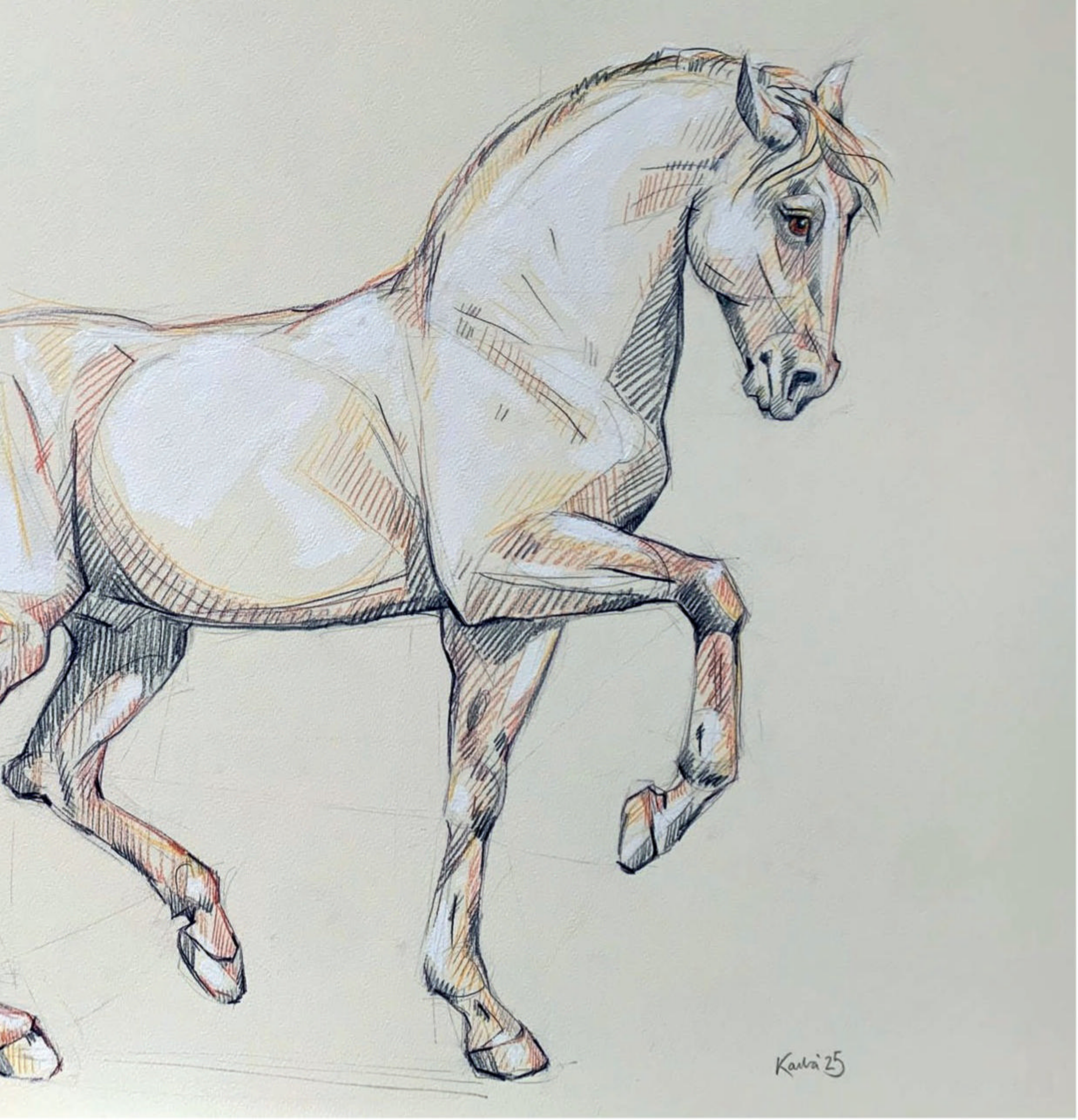
HORSES MEAN A LOT TO ME. As well as riding being enormous fun, horses are calming to be around. There is a feeling of being little again, as you fly along on this powerful animal that is willingly carrying you. Being with them so much – as well as pouring over horse books and images online – gives me a good understanding and confidence in how they move and their structure.

This image is inspired by my love of these graceful beings, especially the flamboyant Spanish breeds. They are immensely powerful, yet elegant. This horse is doing a classical dressage movement, piaffe, which means trotting on the spot. I wanted to capture the lightness and spring in its step.

I used Derwent Lightfast pencils. The delicious box of 70 rich colours, glide across the paper in strong colourful marks. I try to keep each line interesting, necessary and lively. I'm looking to capture a moment rather than a photographic likeness. Somerset Off White paper is my favourite. It's meant for printmaking so is softer, which means you can really draw into it.

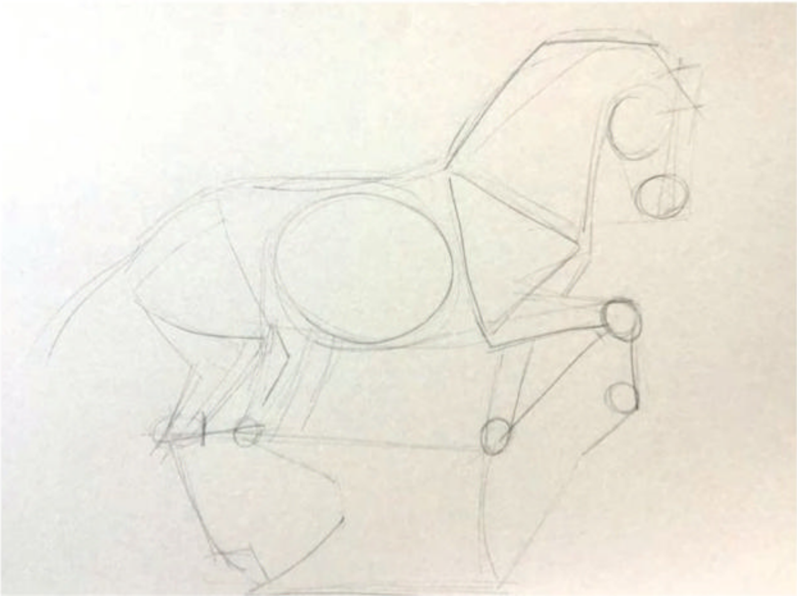
Over time I've worked on murals, printmaking and portrait commissions but I always seem to return to drawing horses. The variety keeps my mind fresh. Drawing every day keeps ideas pinging along and, before everybody else is up, it means that I get a quiet couple of hours in. If an idea goes wrong, no matter. I've not wasted my day.
kashalunt.co.uk





1 LOOSE LINES

These are used to roughly sketch out the basic shape of the horse. I focus on the angles of the legs, arch of the neck and where it's positioned on the paper.

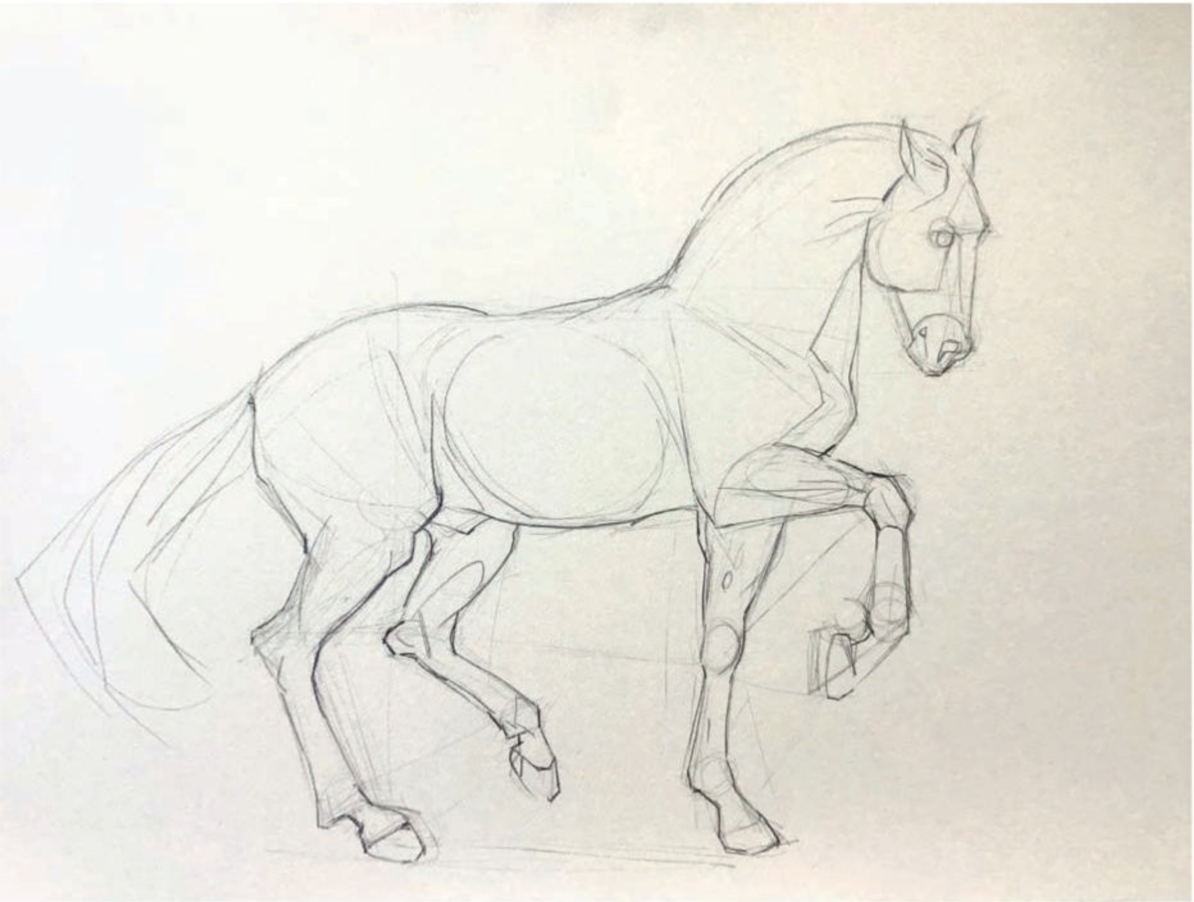


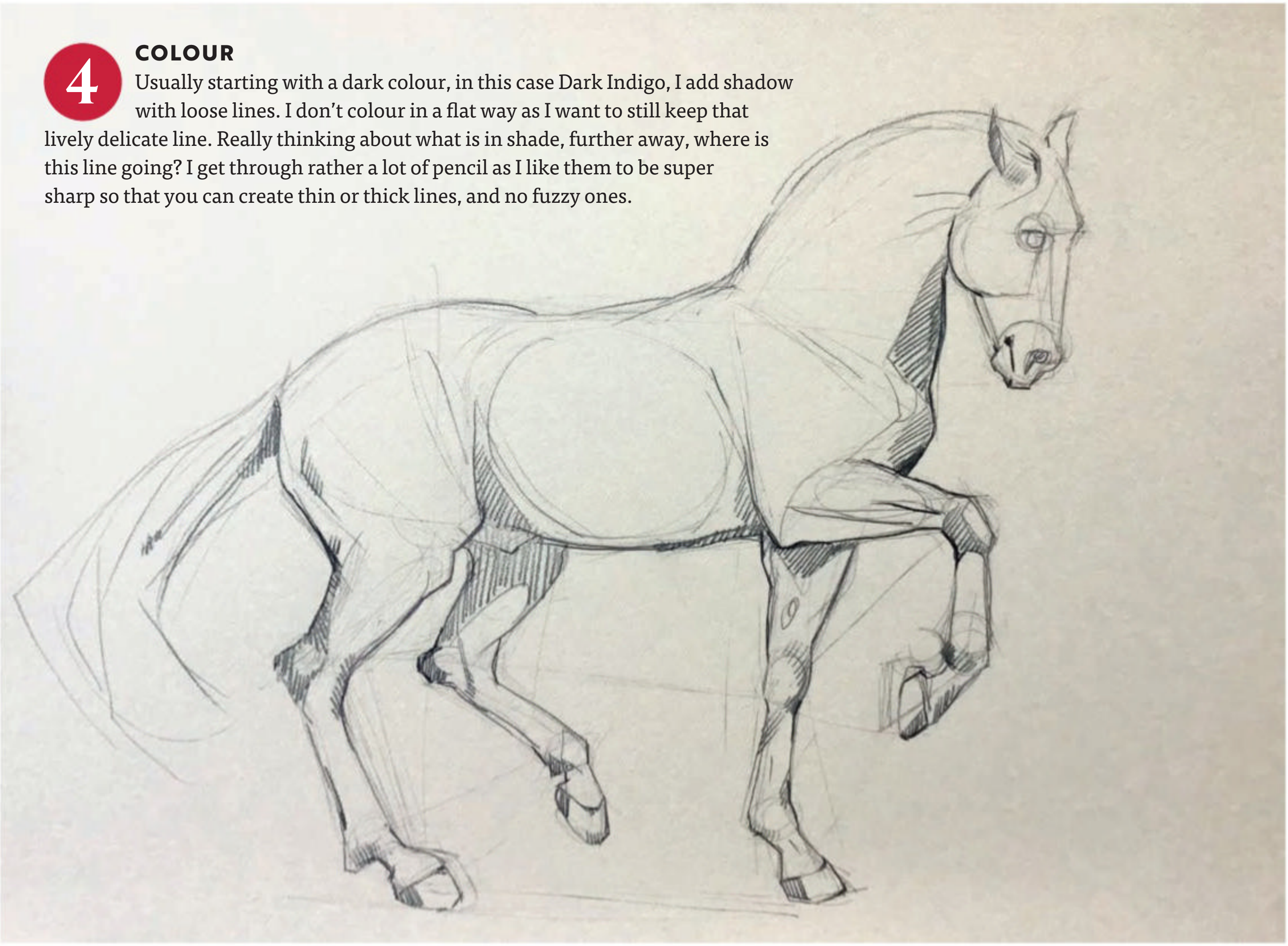
2 BULK UP

In this stage, I use triangles and circles for the rounded body and hindquarters, all the while checking I like the angles of the legs and measuring them with a pencil to make sure they are correct. ▶

3 STEP BACK

I usually take the dog for a walk and, when I come back, it will be with fresh eyes to spot bits that are all a bit not quite right. After correcting looking at the abstract negative spaces – usually which appear under the chin and between the legs – this really helps gauge where I want everything to be. Exaggerating a shape can make a dramatic difference.



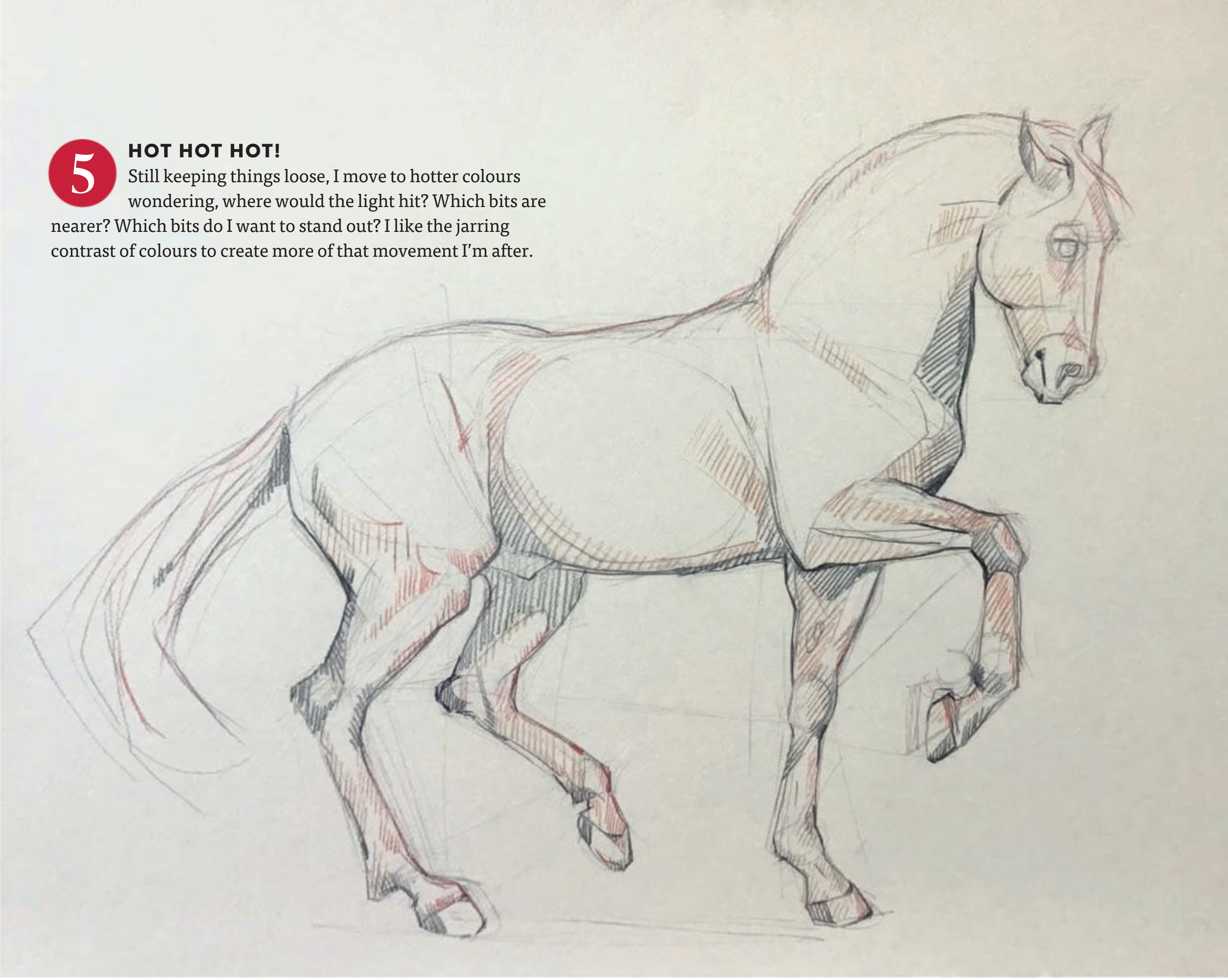


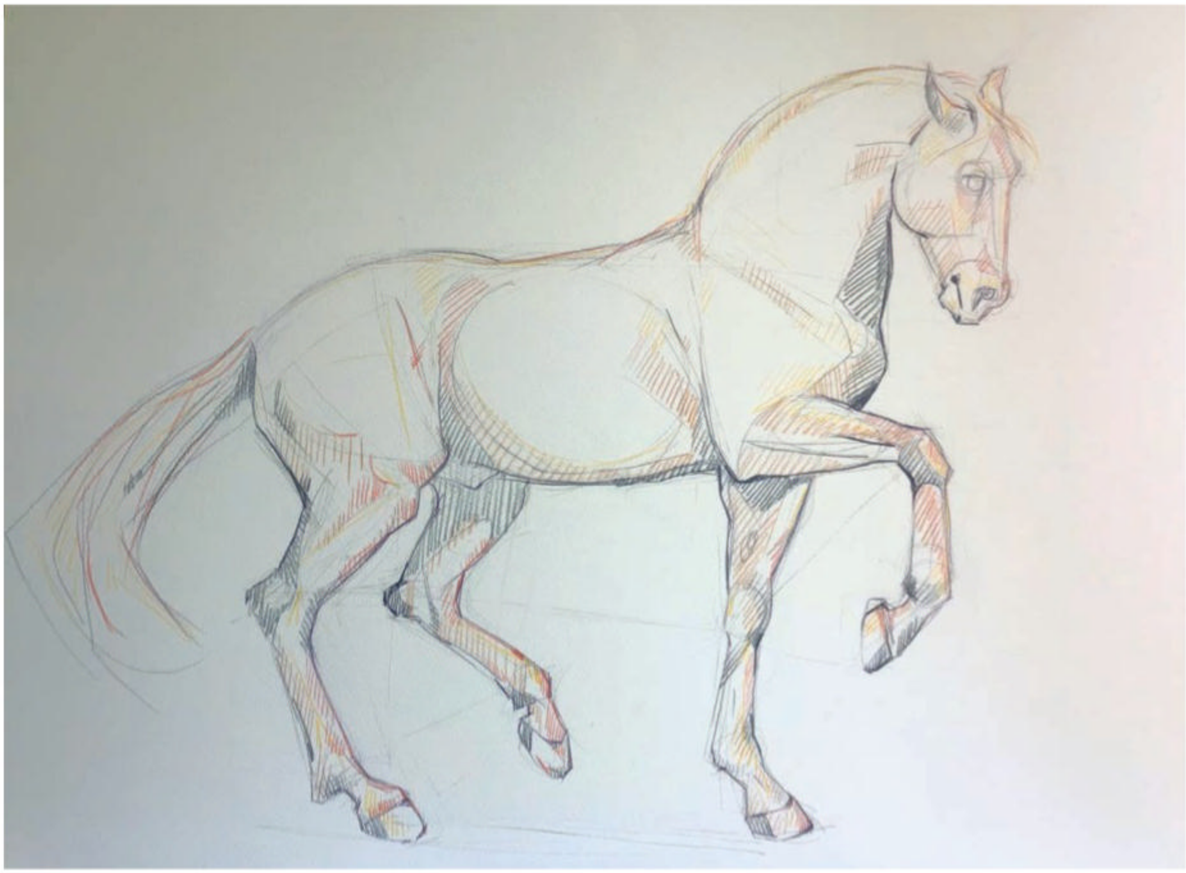
4 COLOUR

Usually starting with a dark colour, in this case Dark Indigo, I add shadow with loose lines. I don't colour in a flat way as I want to still keep that lively delicate line. Really thinking about what is in shade, further away, where is this line going? I get through rather a lot of pencil as I like them to be super sharp so that you can create thin or thick lines, and no fuzzy ones.

5 HOT HOT HOT!

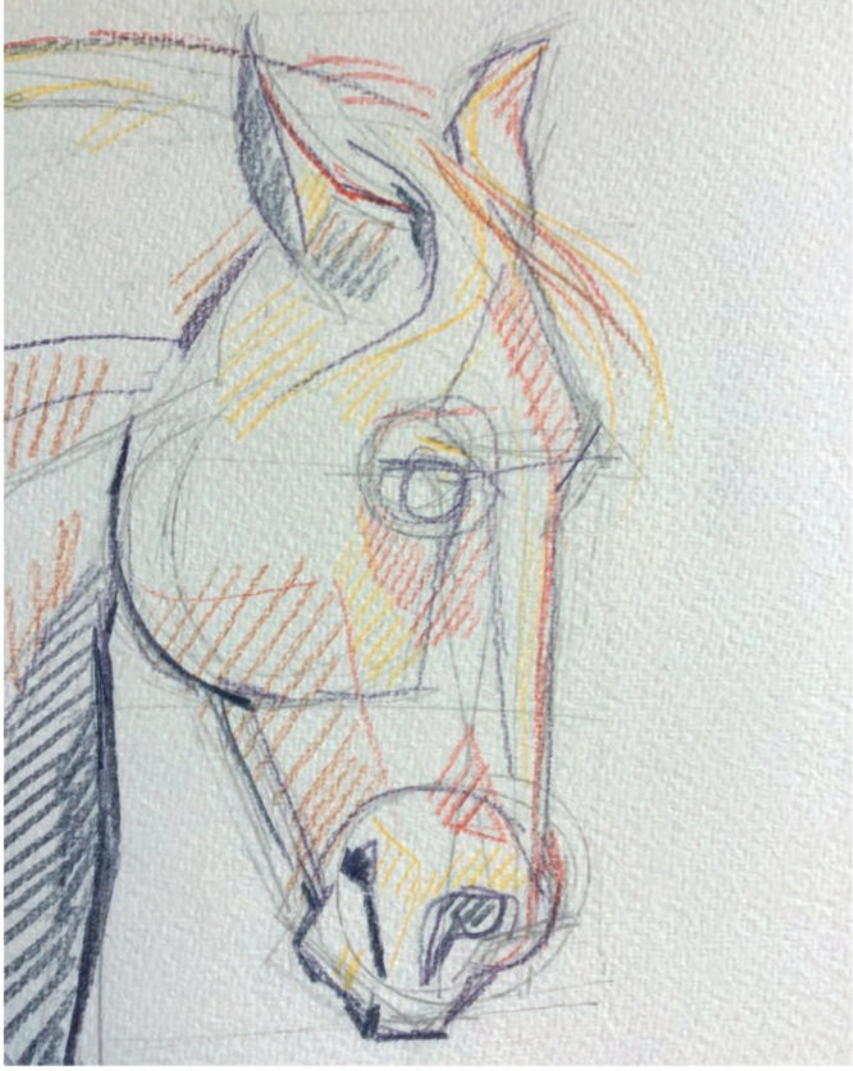
Still keeping things loose, I move to hotter colours wondering, where would the light hit? Which bits are nearer? Which bits do I want to stand out? I like the jarring contrast of colours to create more of that movement I'm after.





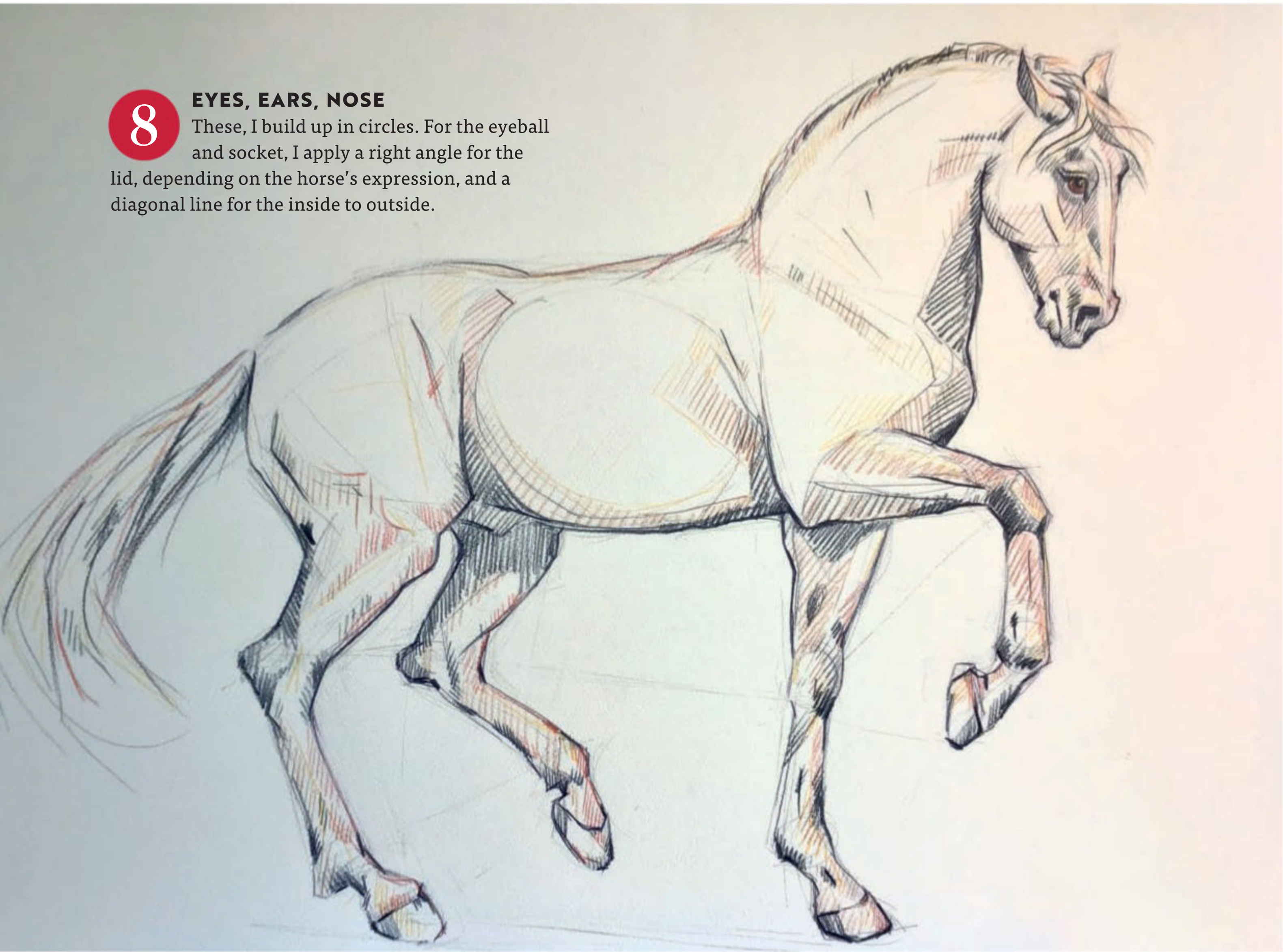
6 DETAILS

For the head, I want to use delicate lines, softer for the belly, sharper for the hooves. Almost like a contour line – describing the shape and where it is going – even in the bits you can't see. Manes and tails require lovely, long flowing lines. ▶



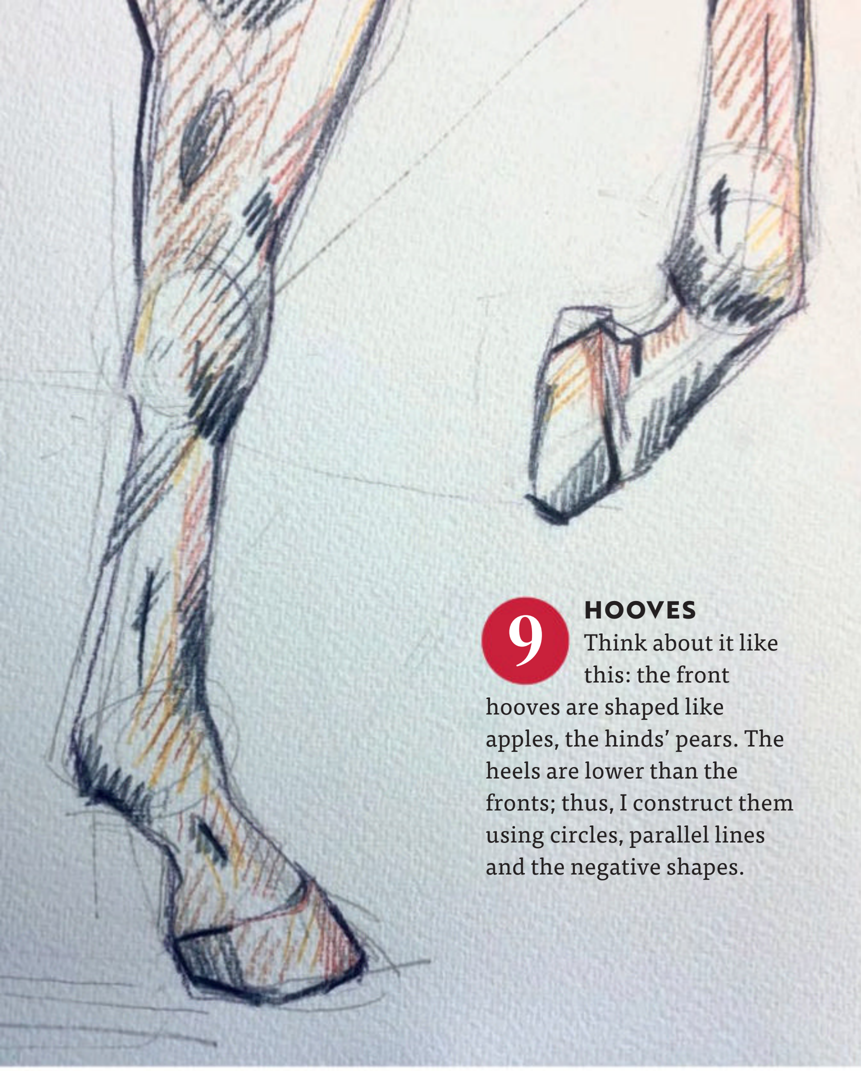
7 DON'T OVERDO

This is written in large letters on my easel. The spaces with nothing in between don't really matter, so I spend a lot of time stepping back, drinking tea and having a think. Too many lines make the drawing look heavy. Look at it in a mirror or take a photo, as this often makes things jump out.



8 EYES, EARS, NOSE

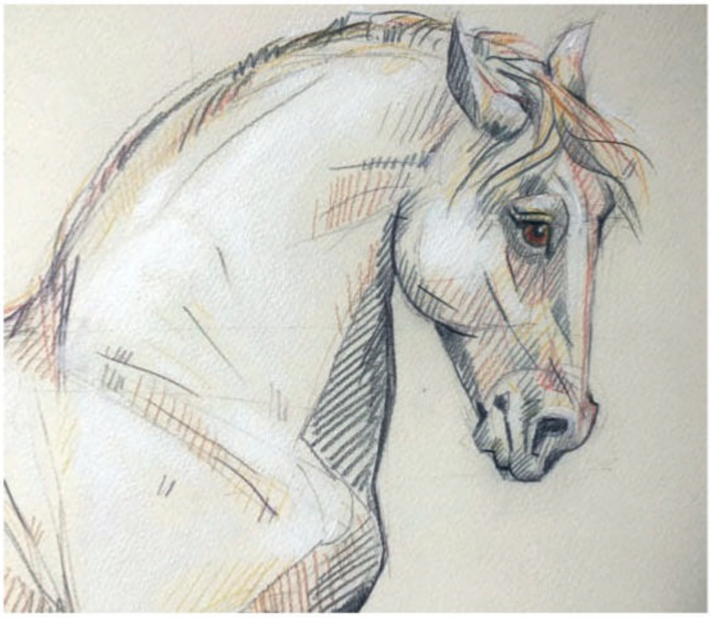
These, I build up in circles. For the eyeball and socket, I apply a right angle for the lid, depending on the horse's expression, and a diagonal line for the inside to outside.



9

HOOVES

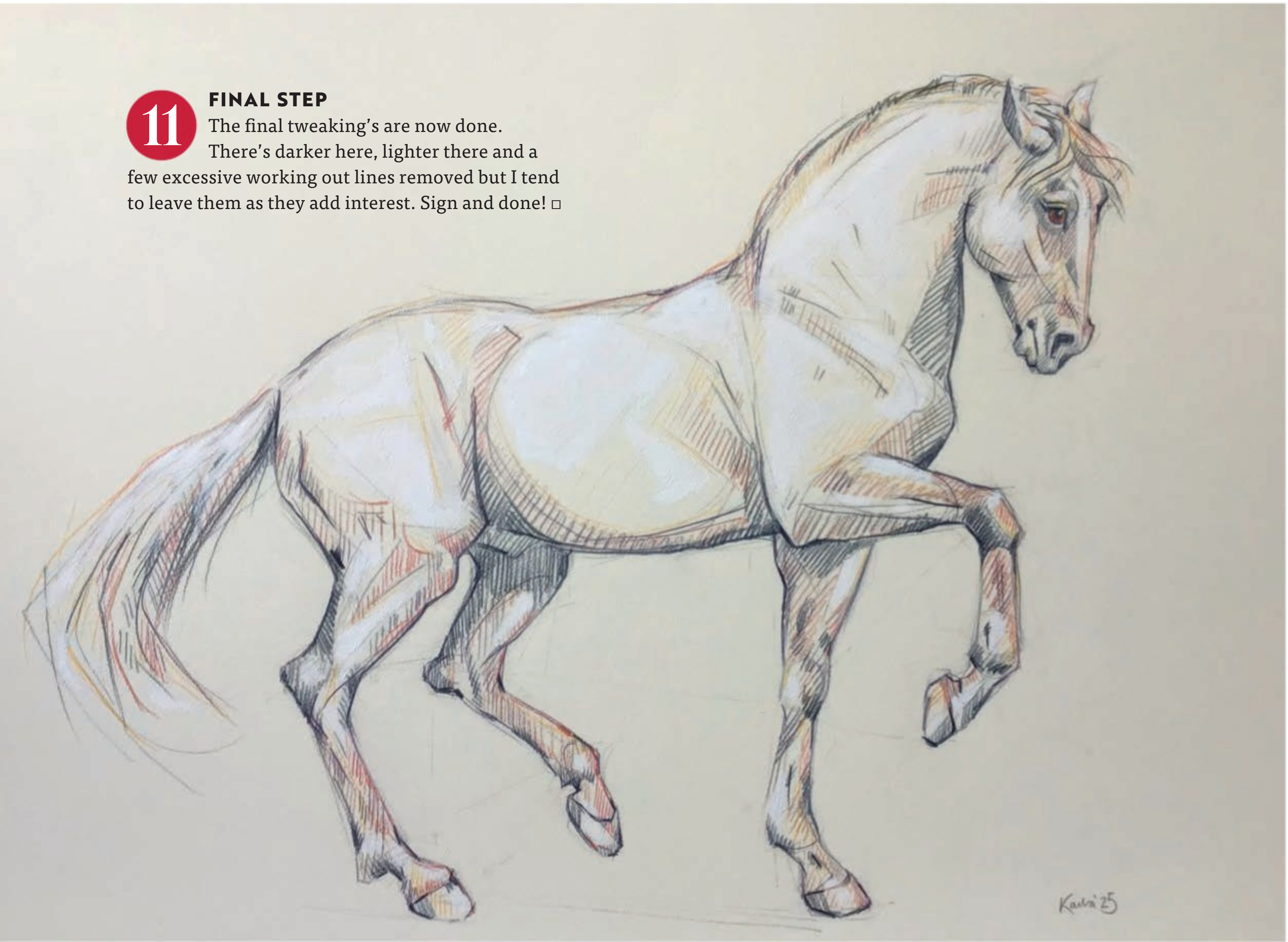
Think about it like this: the front hooves are shaped like apples, the hinds' pears. The heels are lower than the fronts; thus, I construct them using circles, parallel lines and the negative shapes.



10

HIGHLIGHTS

Using a 0.5cm square brush, I use white acrylic straight from the tube and add highlights that make the drawing sing. I add bold strokes on the curving on the belly, the back and arch of neck where the sun would hit and then a tiny dot of shiny for the eye. It lifts the drawing. I step back a lot to keep it balanced and really think about which bits I want to exaggerate. I use dry paint as it clings to the rough paper in a textural way.



11

FINAL STEP

The final tweaking's are now done. There's darker here, lighter there and a few excessive working out lines removed but I tend to leave them as they add interest. Sign and done! □

Say chic!

JESSIE KANELOS WEINER is an American artist and illustrator, now based in Paris. Here, she paints a Haussmannian building, the classic architecture that has defined modern-day Paris, in watercolour

Working as an editorial illustrator, I work in steps and layers to assure good communication with my clients. This includes sending gestural concept sketches, colour tests, a tight final sketch and the final watercolour painting, requiring a good amount of visual problem solving. I live in glorious Paris which is an eternal source of inspiration. I love mashing up two ideas, exaggerating the scale of one of the elements to inspire a fresh idea. To celebrate the long-anticipated arrival of summer, I will turn a Haussmanian corner building into a vase for gigantic summer flowers. But I encourage you to interpret this exercise with the architecture and greenery of wherever your home may be.
jessiekanelosweiner.net

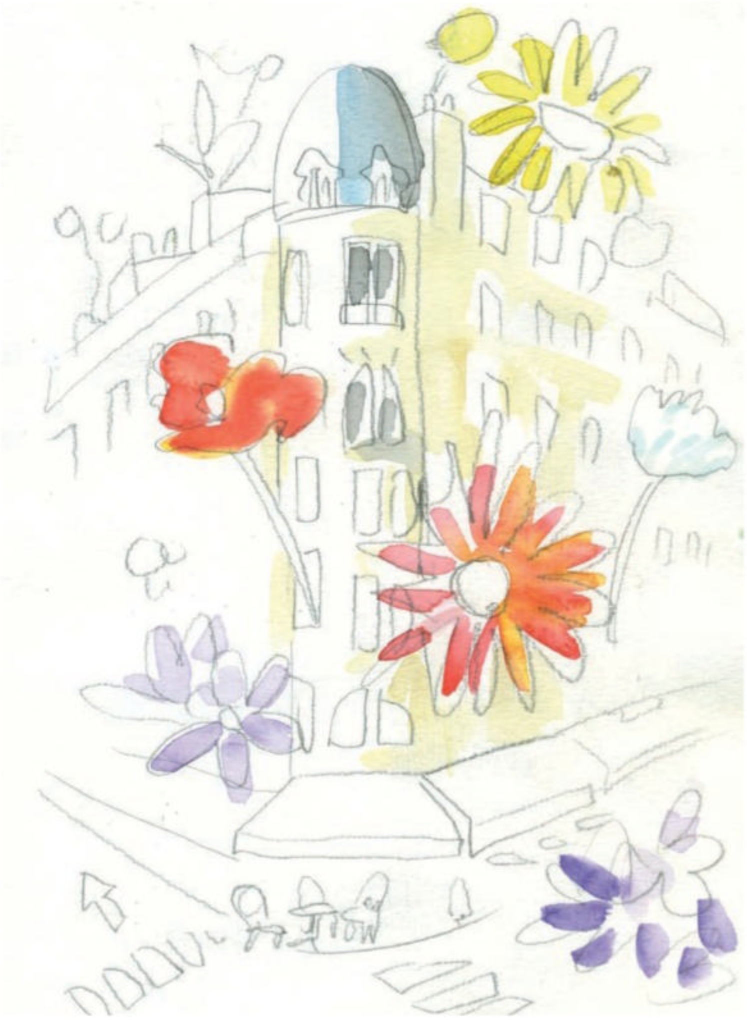
JESSIE'S MATERIALS

Paints
Kuretake GANSAI TAMBI 24 Watercolours Set

Brushes
Da Vinci Kolinsky-Rotmarder 4
Gerstaecker Kolinsky 22468

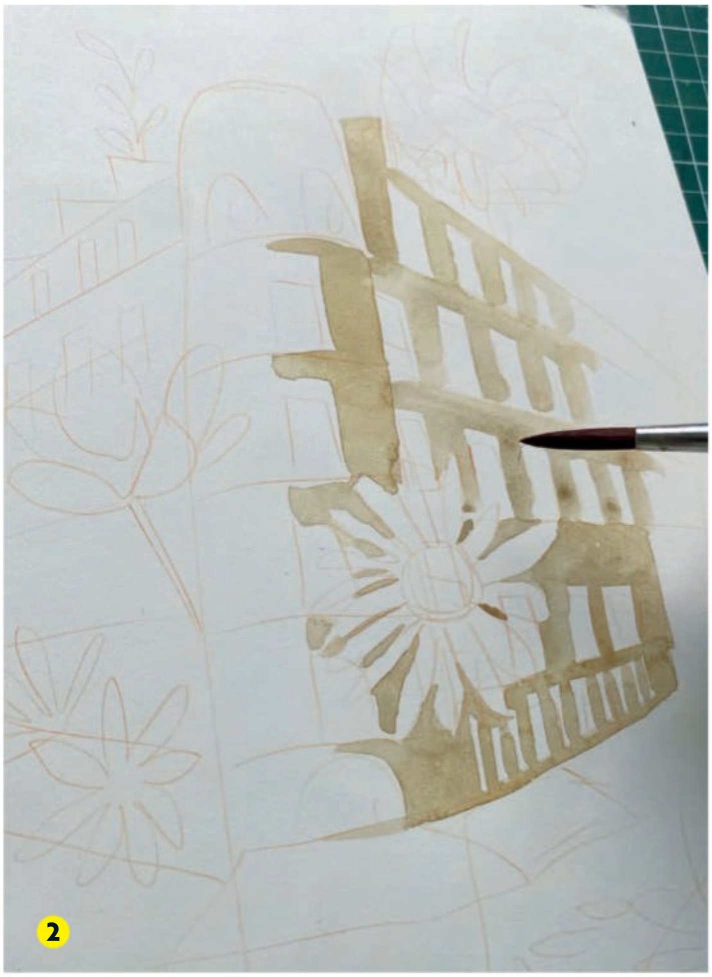
Support
Papier aquarelle Fontaine Clairefontaine (Grain satiné - hot pressed 300g/m²)
Caran d'Ache Prismalo watercolour pencil, 999 050

Other supplies
4H pencil
Winsor & Newton watercolour pencils
Winsor & Newton colourless masking fluid



1 STARTING OUT: SKETCH WITH COLOUR

Before I begin, I like to think through my visual concept through loose, gestural sketching. I research Parisian buildings and wildflowers and start merging together the elements. I like the idea of how the flowers are arranged in the building's open windows. Making art is all about choices. I prefer to test out all the variables before moving onto the final piece. This assures I am painting with intention, and I reduce the amount of mistakes I may make when I move onto expensive watercolour paper. Since I am happy with my sketch, I quickly add a layer of watercolour just to get an idea of how the highly saturated flowers will interact with the more muted building. Once my concept is solid, I draw out the composition on watercolour paper using an orange watercolour pencil. This creates a softer line which will get buffed out once the watercolour is added. ▶



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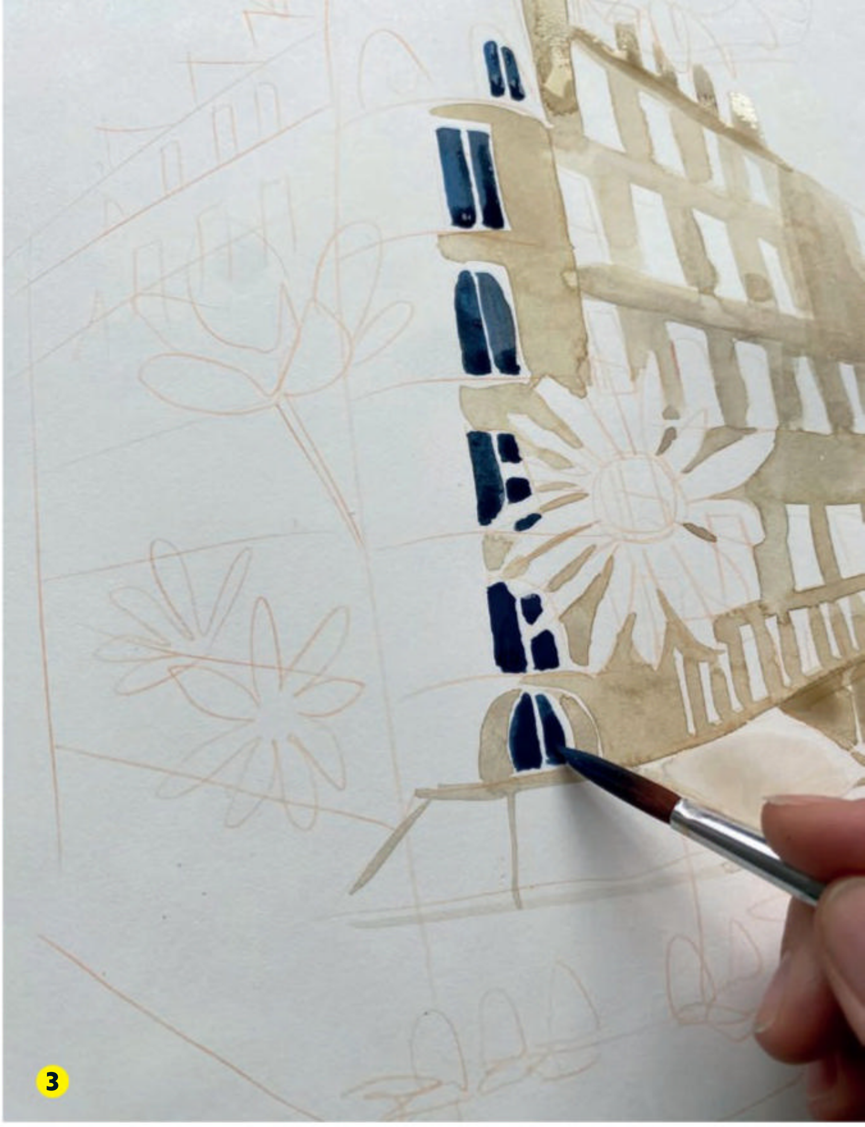

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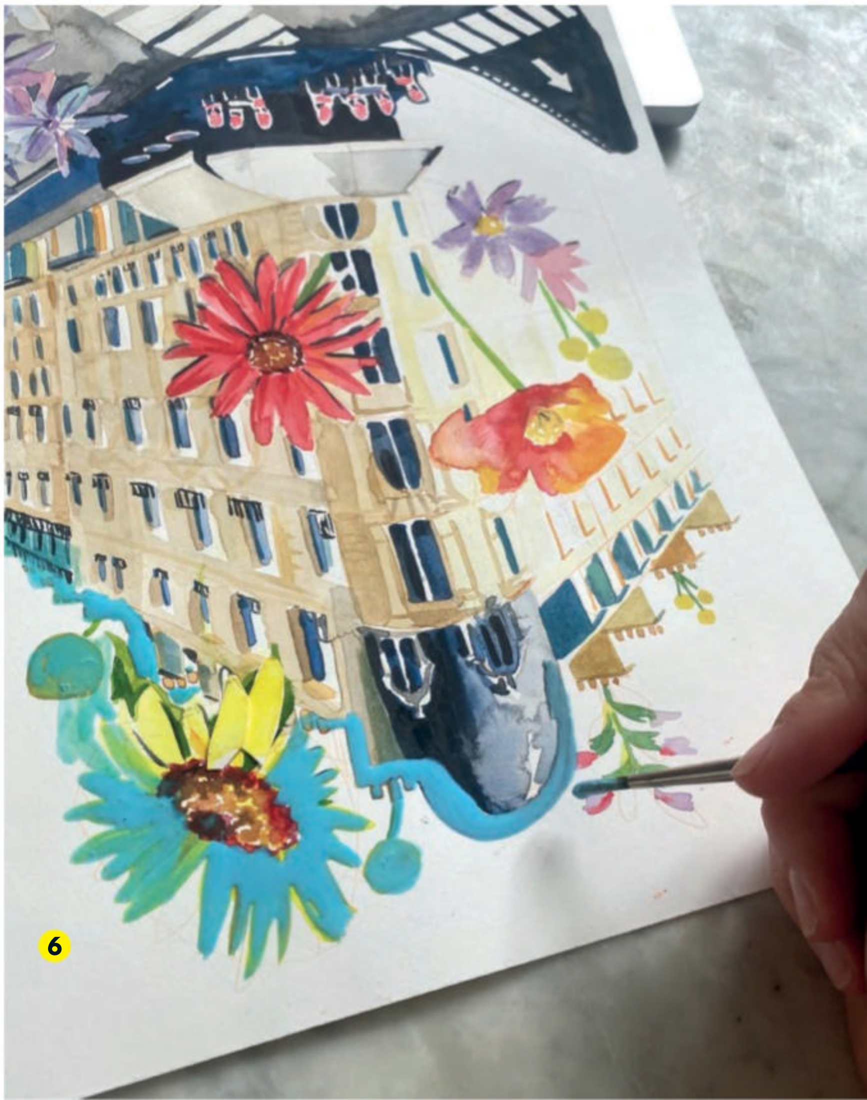

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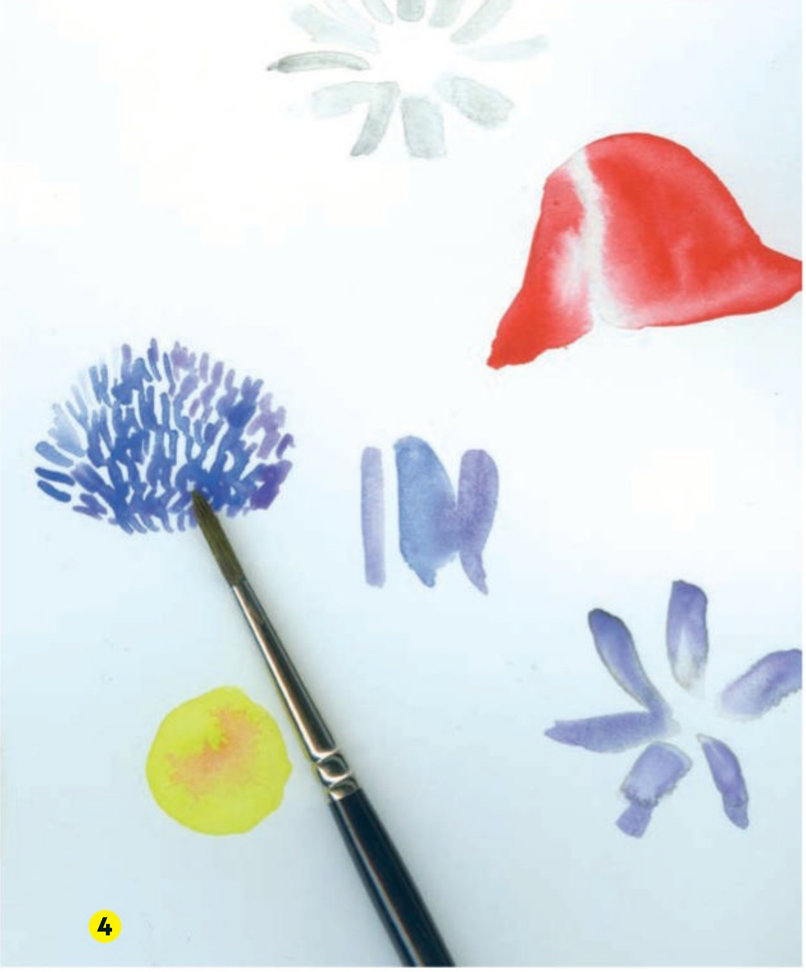
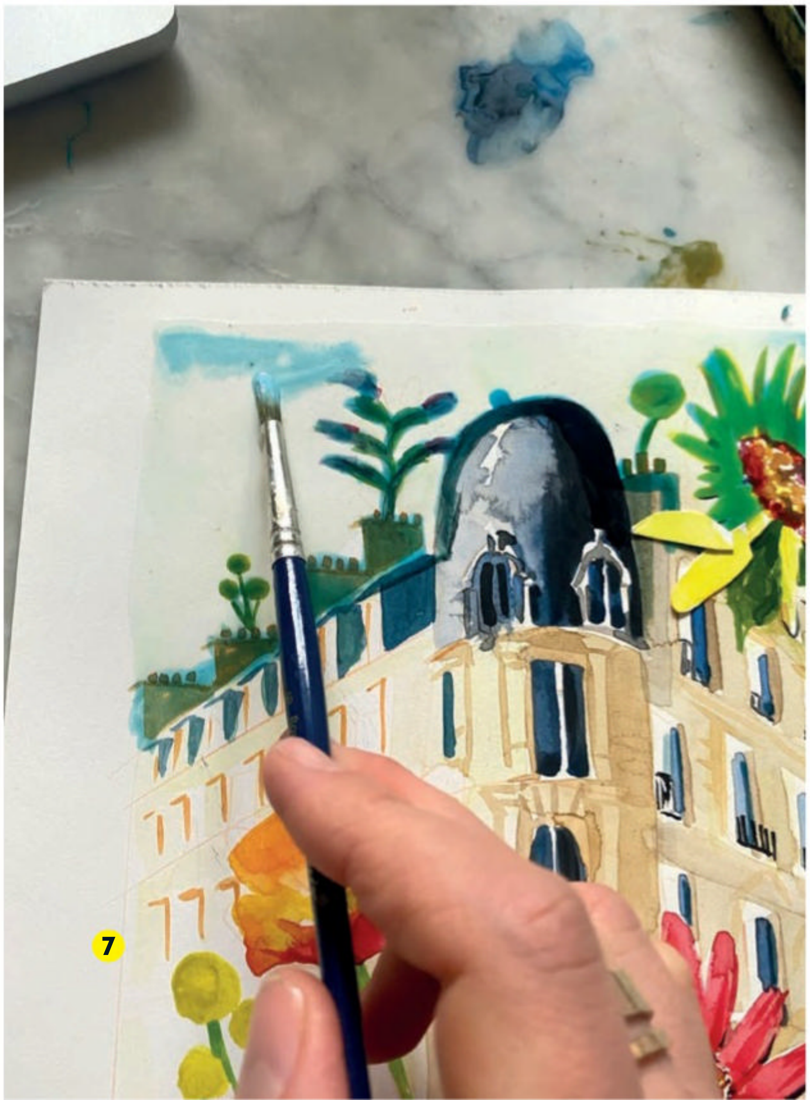




2 ADDING LAYERS

I now decide where the light source is coming from. This assures there is consistency in how I apply colour and contrast. Since my light source is coming from the left, I mix a tan wash and paint it on the right side of the building's facade. To avoid unnecessary bleeding, my plan is to paint the building first, before attacking the highly saturated flowers.

3 DARK WASHES

This may be controversial, but I paint the blue-black windows to start building depth. Many watercolourists insist on working systematically from lightest to darkest but, if I know something is dark, I'd rather commit to painting it early on to build contrast.

4 PAINTING DETAIL

Before I commit to painting the flowers, I test out a few techniques first. Because the blue flower is so textured, I create a repeated texture of parallel lines starting on the bottom with a dry brush, alternating between dark blue and a purple watercolour. To represent the poppy flower, I dampen the surface with a wet paintbrush and dot in the red on both sides to achieve a sense of volume. If you observe flowers closely, you'll notice that their petals aren't always one specific colour, but nuances on several. In this case, I choose two different colours and use them interchangeably, mixing them until they meet in the middle.

5 COLOUR MIXING

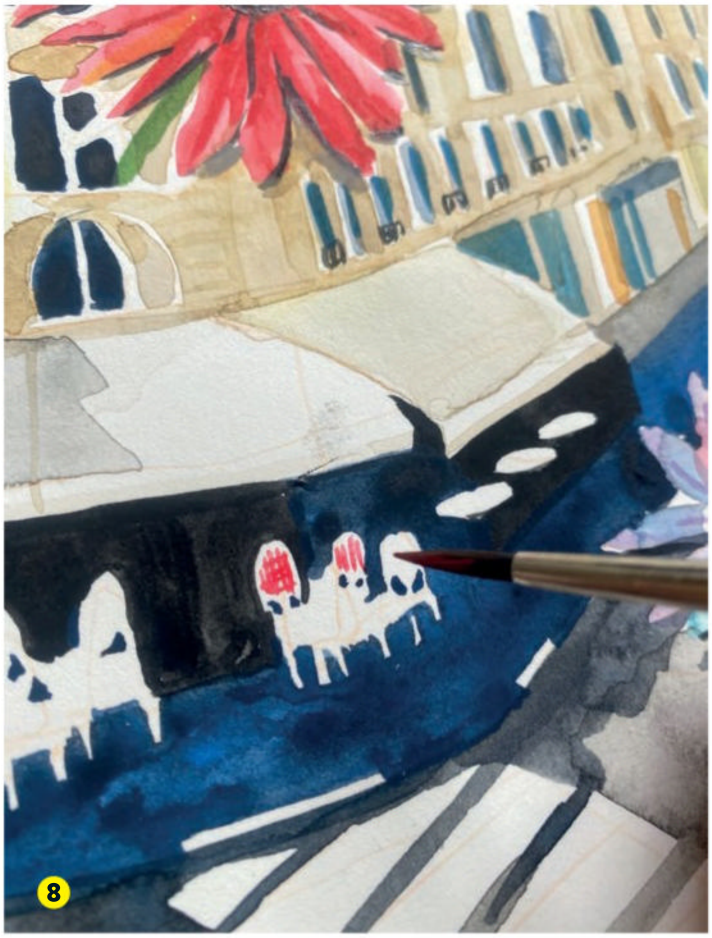
If you observe flowers closely, you'll notice that their petals aren't always one specific colour, but nuances on several. In this case, I choose two different colours and use them interchangeably, mixing them until they meet in the middle.

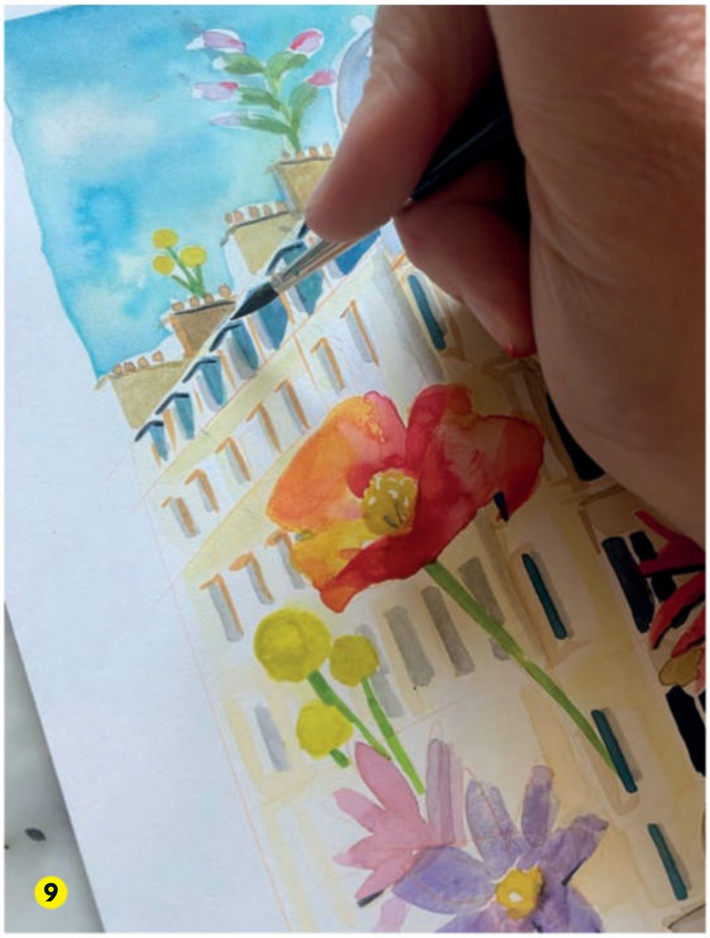
6 PROTECT YOUR WORK

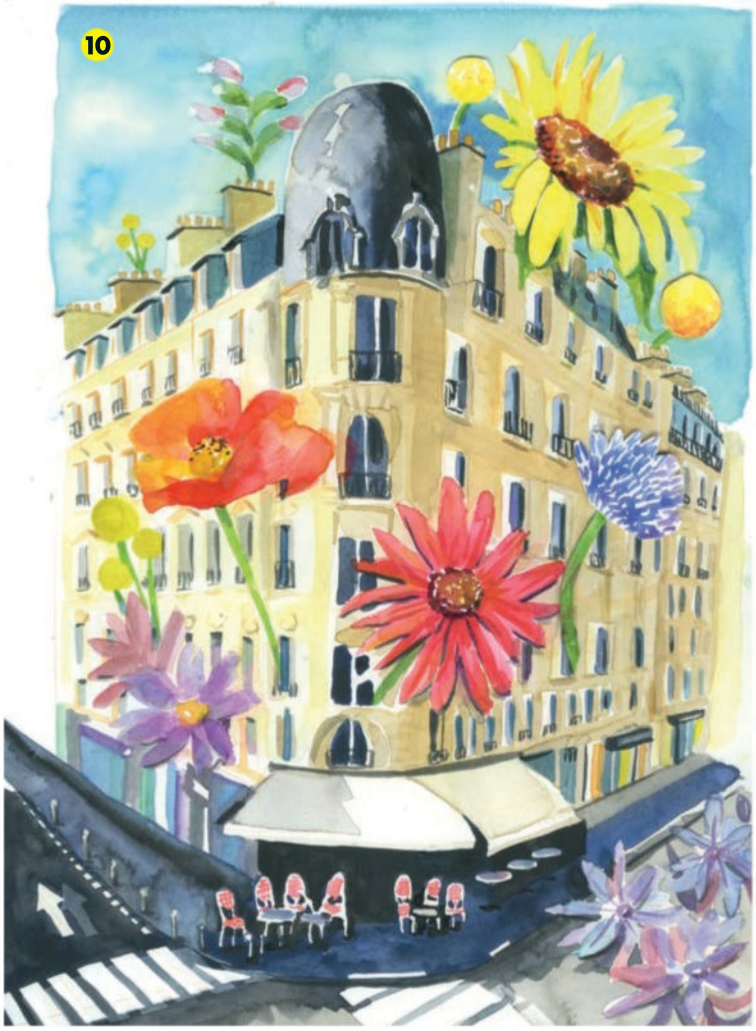
I still struggle painting an even layer of wash to represent a sky. It can often become spotty or bleed into the other existing details I have painted. To set myself up for success, I mask the dried watercolour rooftops and chimneys I've painted by covering it with drawing gum, or masking fluid. It's a latex liquid which can be painted on the surface of the paper to mask it from watercolour.

7 DON'T SPEND TOO MUCH ON YOUR BRUSHES

Once it's fully dried and removed, your planes of colour shouldn't meet, and you should have two distinct layers. Be sure to use an inexpensive brush when applying the drawing gum because it will stick to the bristles, and it is difficult to clean completely. I take a large, wet round brush and add an even layer of water to the sky to prepare the paper for wet-on-wet. I load up my brush with sky blue and apply it to the wet layer, twirling the brush to create a feathered effect. ▶







8

THE REMOVAL PROCESS

When the watercolour has dried completely, rub the drawing gum gently with your finger to remove it from the surface of your paper.

9

SHARPENING UP

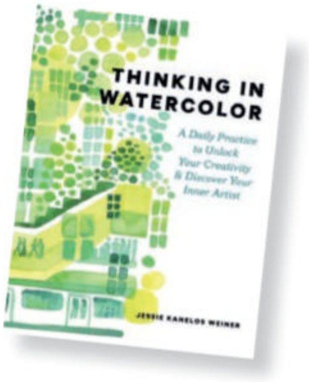
When a painting is 80% complete, I like to step away for a few minutes and come back with fresh eyes. Watercolour is so easy to overdo. This is a tip that can help you consider how you want to move forward. I go back with a dry brush to reinforce some architectural details and add some details to the cafe chairs.

10

WRAPPING IT UP

When finishing any painting, I like to ask myself what its final usage will be. If it's to share on Instagram, I upload it to my phone to see if it works well on a screen. If it's meant to be hung on a wall, I'll throw it up on one to see how this changes my final thoughts. Even if I'm unhappy with the final outcome, I always like to identify one thing I think is successful about it so I can move onto the next one with a set intention on how I can continue evolving my techniques. If it was a giant flop, I cut it up and collage it back together again. And if you enjoyed the process of painting, that is a reward enough in itself.

Jessie Weiner's book, Thinking in Watercolor: A Daily Practice To Unlock Your Creativity & Discover Your Inner Artist, is out now from all good book sellers ◻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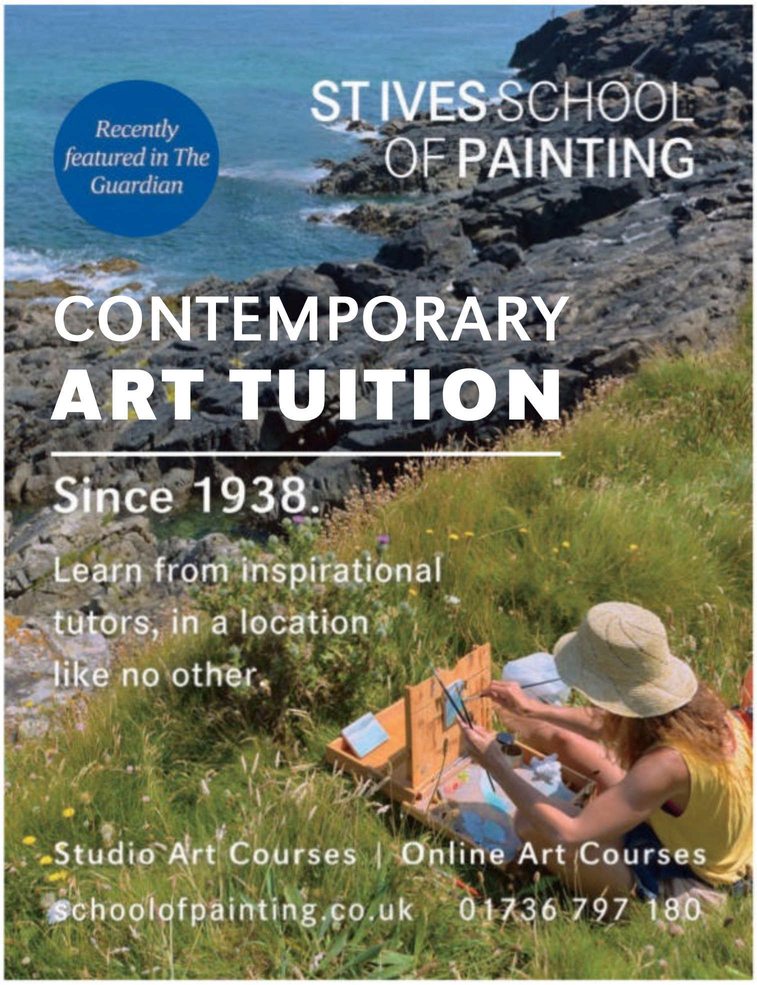

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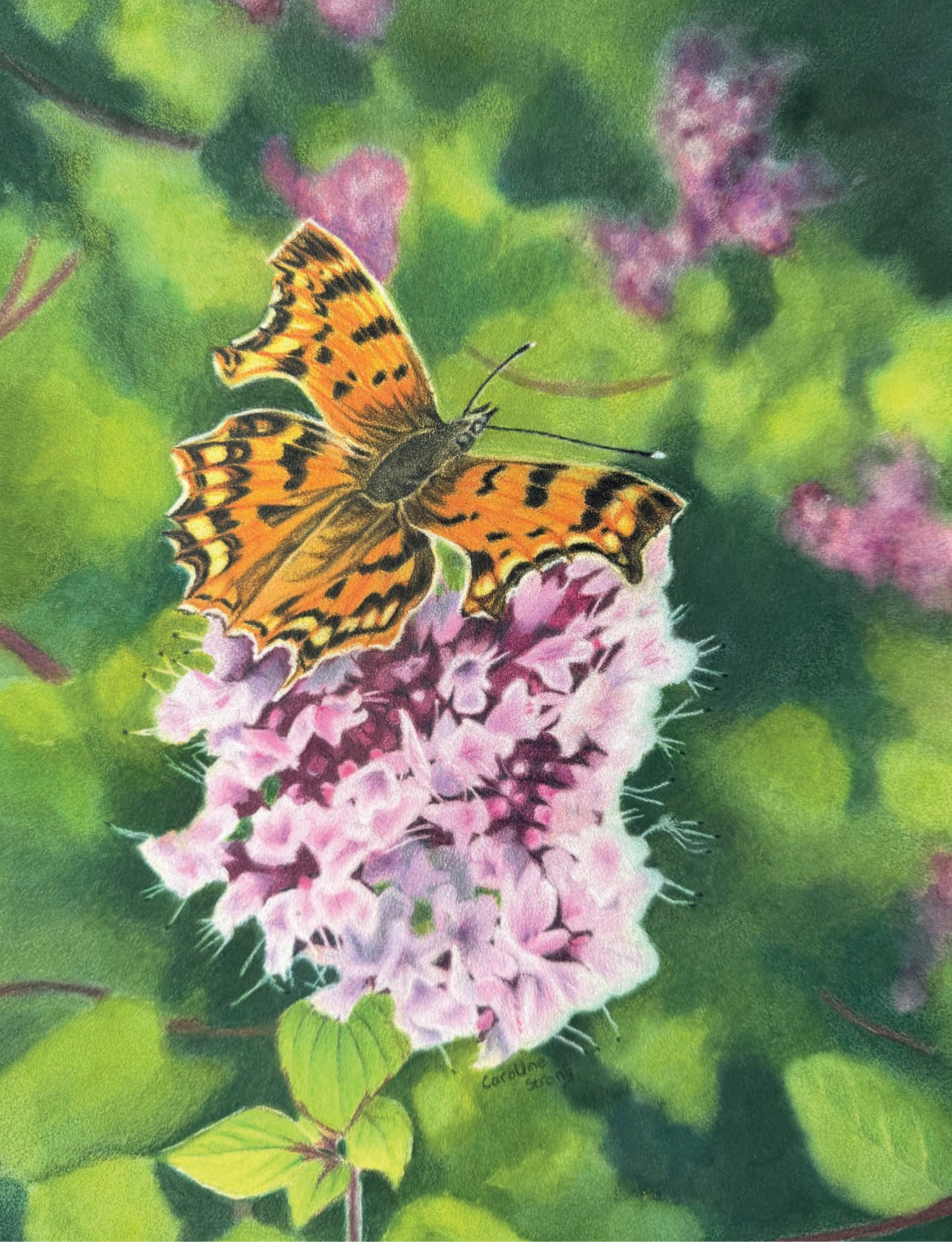

Caroline Strong

The signs of summer

Professional artist and tutor **CAROLINE STRONG** shows you how she paints and draws her favourite subjects, a butterfly on a wildflower, in watercolour and coloured pencil

CAROLINE'S MATERIALS

Coloured Pencils
Caran d'Ache Supracolour II soft, water-soluble pencils: Reddish Orange (040), Yellow (010), White (001), Purple (090), Periwinkle Blue (131), Pale Yellow (011), Light Olive (245)
Faber Castell Polychromos Coloured Pencils: Light Yellow Glaze, Cadmium Orange, Dark Cadmium Orange, Scarlet Red, Raw Umber, Burnt Umber, Sepia, Black, White, Middle Purple Pink, Fuchsia Light, Magenta, Crimson, Red Violet, Violet, Purple Violet, Dark Indigo, Grass Green, Pine Green, Greenish Yellow Cold Grey V

Watercolours
Winsor & Newton: Winsor Yellow, Hookers Green, Ultramarine Blue, Permanent Rose, Permanent Magenta, Sepia

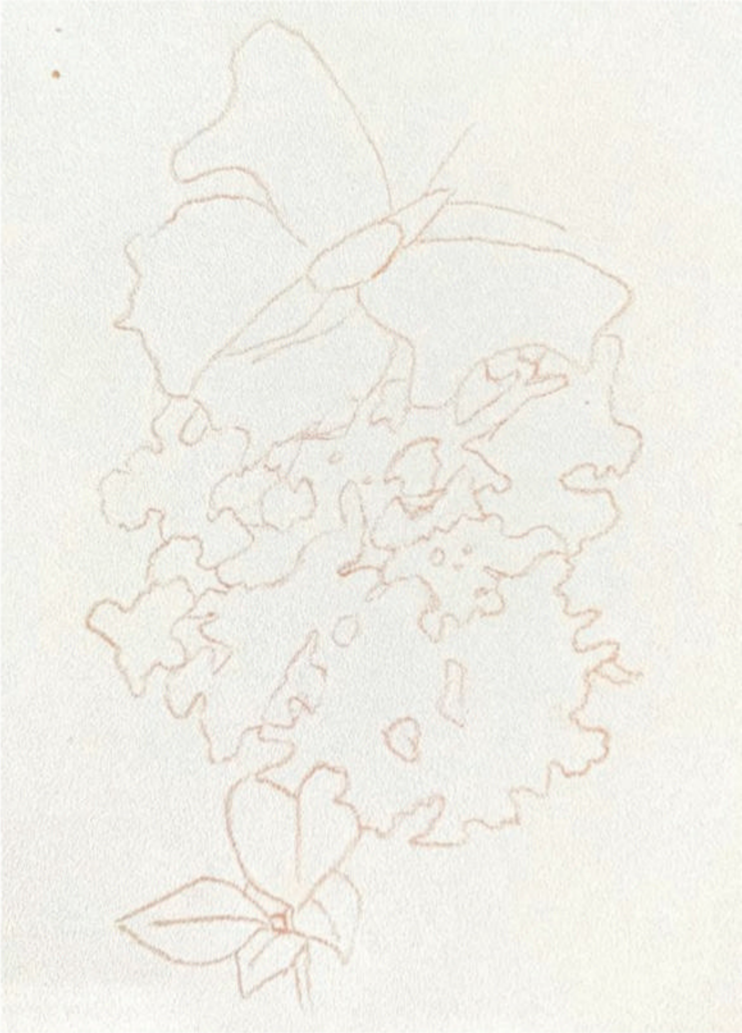
Support
White PastelMat board 25x35cm
No 6 and No 3 round watercolour brush
Water Pot
Putty Rubber
Glassine to protect against smudging

As a child, I remember running through a garden full of flowers, chasing and watching the butterflies. These floaty, delicate insects, flitting from flower to flower in the sunshine, sipping nectar, collecting pollen and pollinating as they go, are so important and should be valued.

I live in Southern England among the wonderful chalk downlands. I have always enjoyed drawing and studying it technically at school. Then cartography at work led me to drawing in pen and ink before moving to include watercolour. I was persuaded to teach, and I have never stopped learning and teaching since.

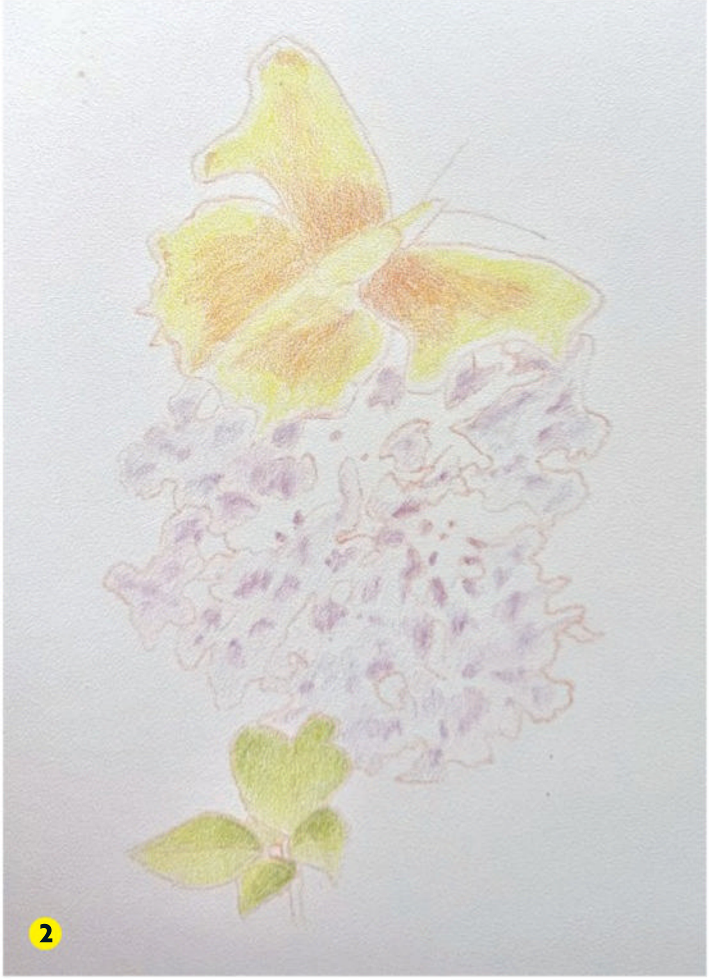
This tutorial describes my drawing and painting process for a Comma Butterfly on Wild Marjoram. I used both water-soluble and dry coloured pencils for the butterfly, and then added a watercolour wash background, on a white PastelMat board. After drawing the composition, I laid a base layer of water-soluble pencil, followed by a more detailed 'dry' pencil in many layers, before finally adding a blended watercolour background. The wax and oil content of the coloured pencil repels the watercolour, and when dry I can add coloured pencil over it if necessary.

Facebook: @colourful.strong.art



1 COMPOSITION

I take lots of photos when out walking and I chose this composition of flower and butterfly to give the butterfly room to fly into the scene. I drew lightly with a water-soluble pencil so that it would blend into the background later. ▶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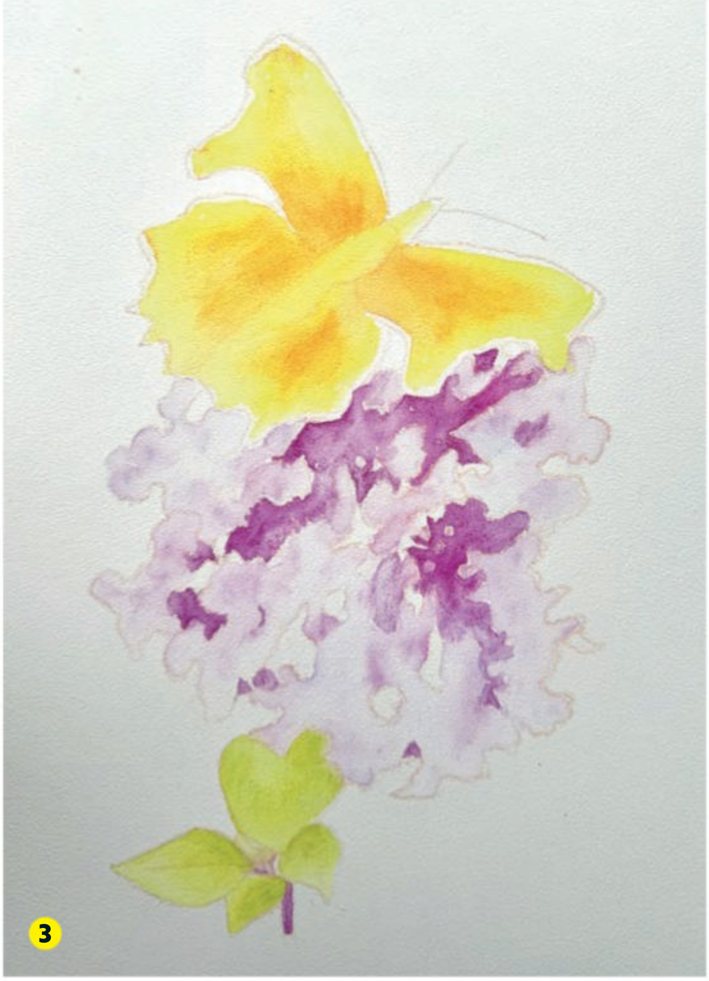
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2
BLOCKING IN

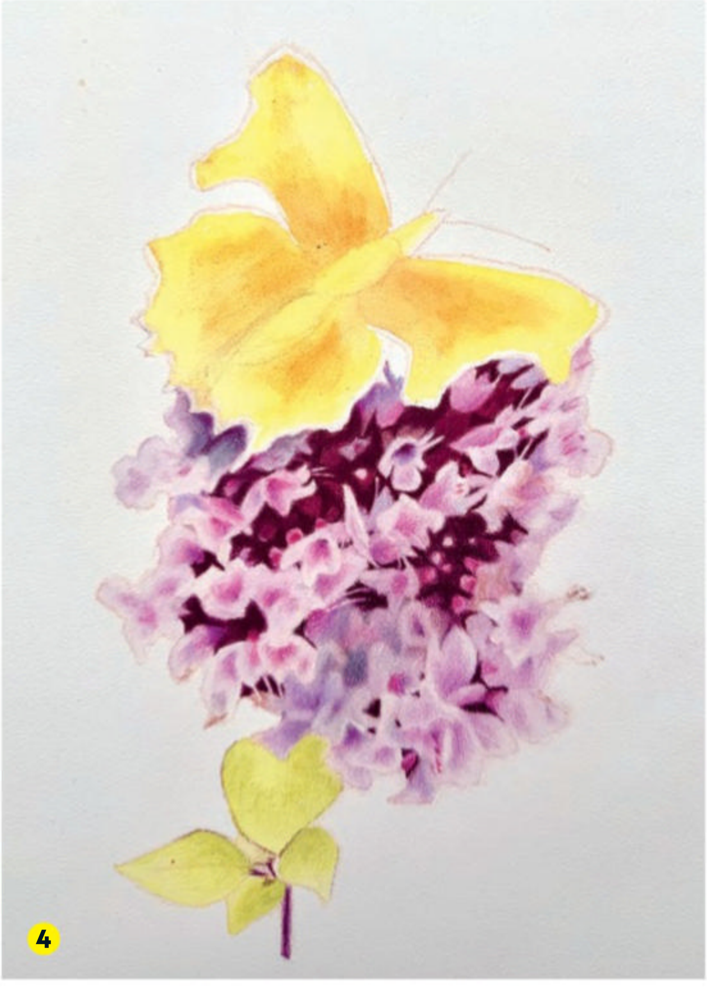
Using water-soluble coloured pencils, I blocked in yellow and orange over the butterfly. At this point, I ignored the dark markings, as these would be added later with a dry coloured pencil. The butterfly can be outlined where necessary in white or ivory with a dry coloured pencil to define an edge that won't bleed. I then blocked in the leaves in green and yellow and added the stem. Next, I used mainly white together with various pinks and purples to form large, joined areas. At this point, it wasn't necessary to be too precise as details would be added later with dry coloured pencil.

3
ADDING WATER

These areas were then activated with water using a No 3 round brush, working from light to dark. I started with yellow on the butterfly, moving to the oranges. Remember to wash the brush out and change the water before activating the colour on the flowers, and to leave gaps for the background to show through. Finally, I added water to the leaves and the stem.

4
DEFINING THE FLOWERS

Using dry Polychromos pencils, I started defining the flower heads. I used a sharp pencil and light pressure, with small circular motions to define dark shadows and buds (negative shapes) around the flowers. This let's me concentrate on the more subtle colours for the petals and their shadows later. I used various shades of pink, crimson and purple. For the pale petals, there were many layers of white with little colour. I use a sharp pencil to start, with gentle to medium pressure, remembering to use circular strokes. For the pale shadows, I used Light Ultramarine, moving to Dark Indigo and Cold Grey V for the deeper shadows.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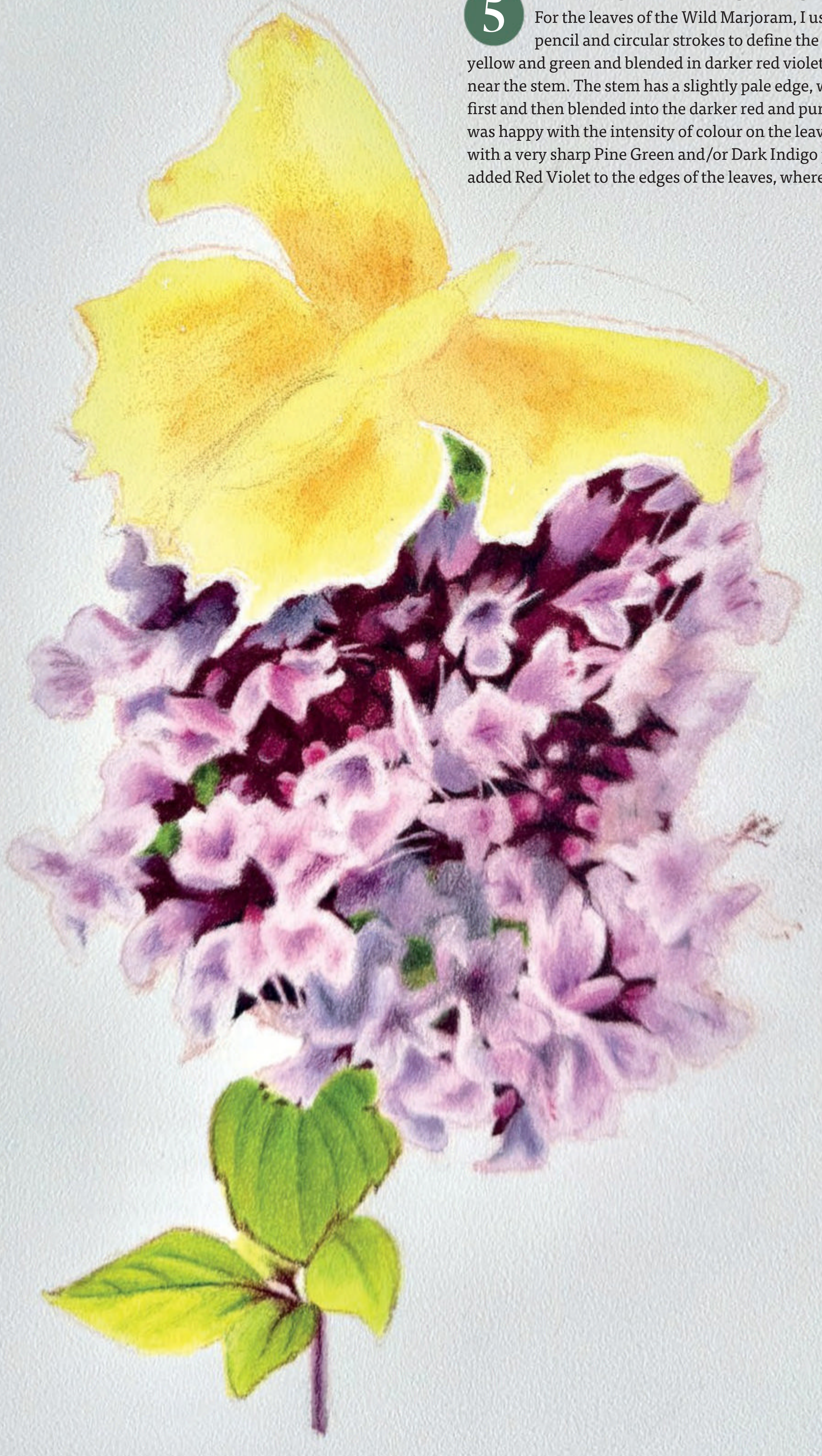
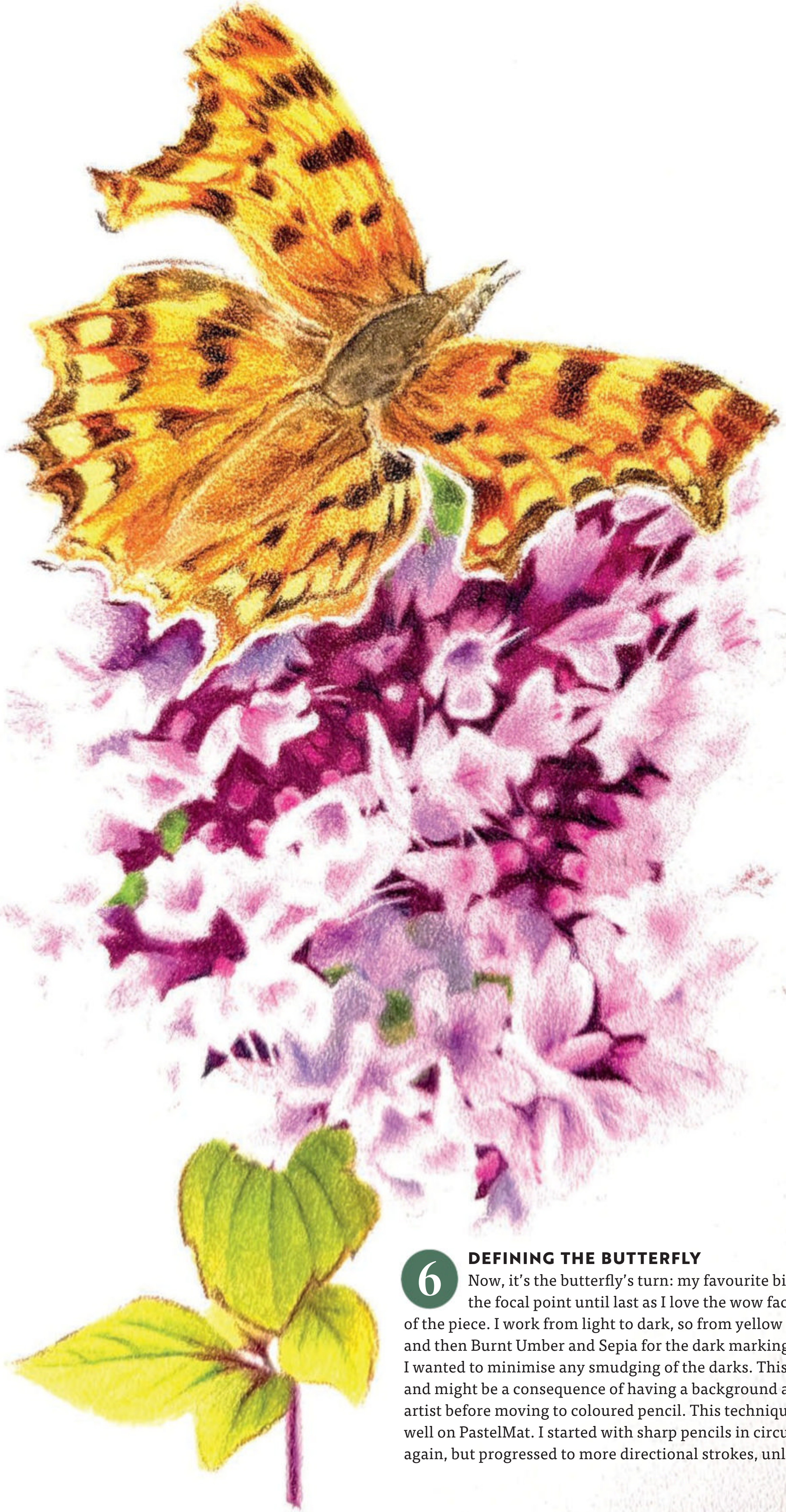
5

DRAWING THE LEAVES AND STEM

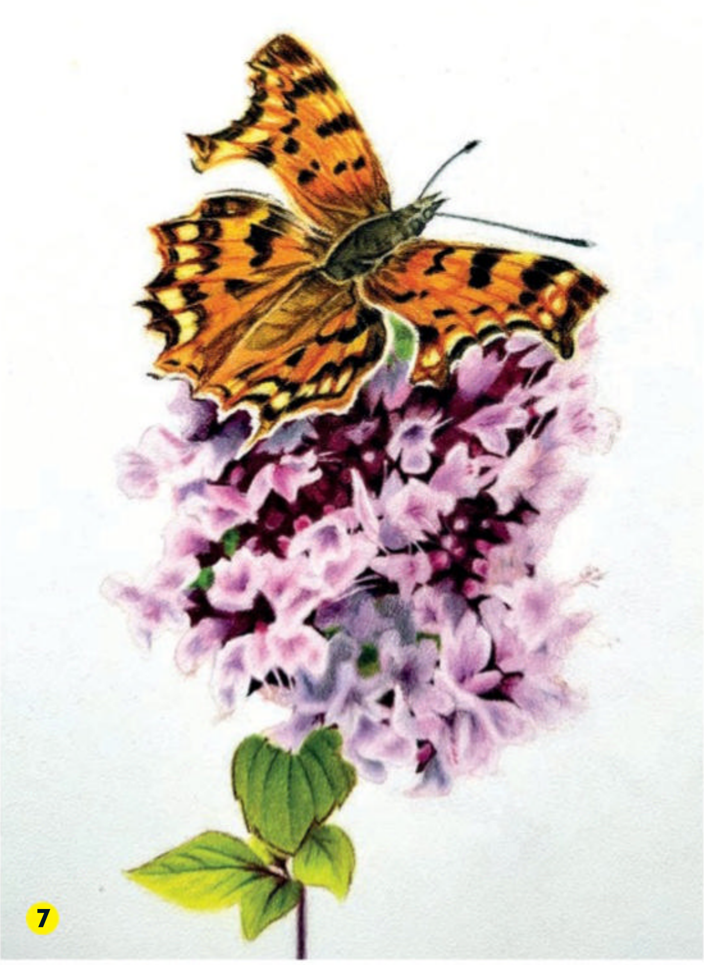
For the leaves of the Wild Marjoram, I used the usual sharp pencil and circular strokes to define the leaves in shades of yellow and green and blended in darker red violet and purple violet near the stem. The stem has a slightly pale edge, which I established first and then blended into the darker red and purple violets. When I was happy with the intensity of colour on the leaves, I added the veins with a very sharp Pine Green and/or Dark Indigo pencil. Finally, I added Red Violet to the edges of the leaves, where necessary. ▸





6 DEFINING THE BUTTERFLY

Now, it's the butterfly's turn: my favourite bit. I prefer to leave the focal point until last as I love the wow factor near the end of the piece. I work from light to dark, so from yellow to orange, red, and then Burnt Umber and Sepia for the dark markings, as at this stage, I wanted to minimise any smudging of the darks. This works for me and might be a consequence of having a background as a watercolour artist before moving to coloured pencil. This technique also works well on PastelMat. I started with sharp pencils in circular motions again, but progressed to more directional strokes, unlike the flowers.



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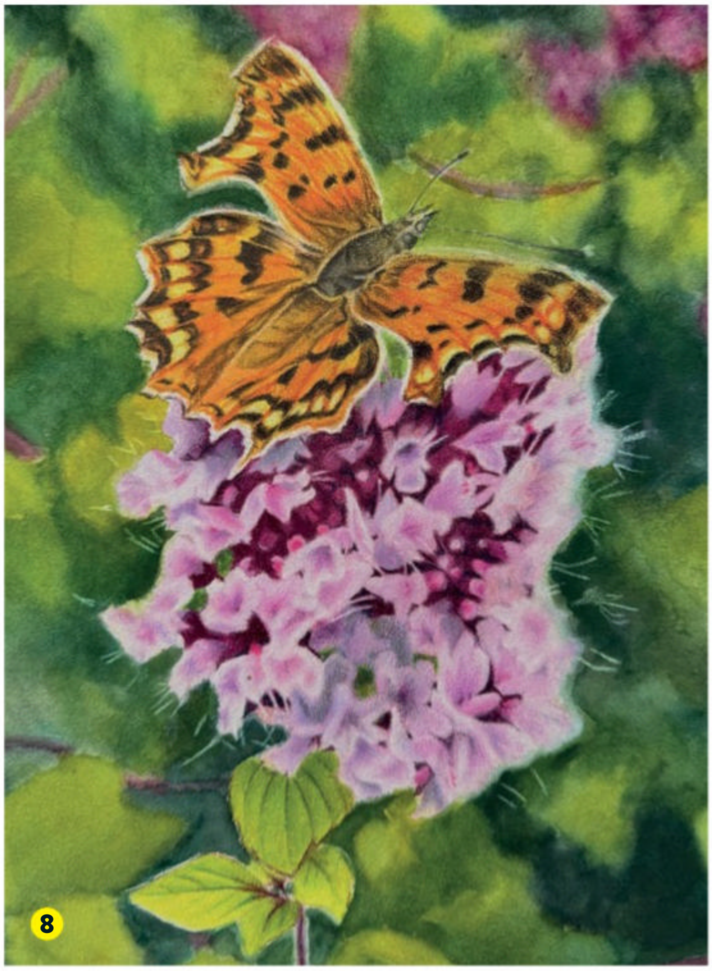

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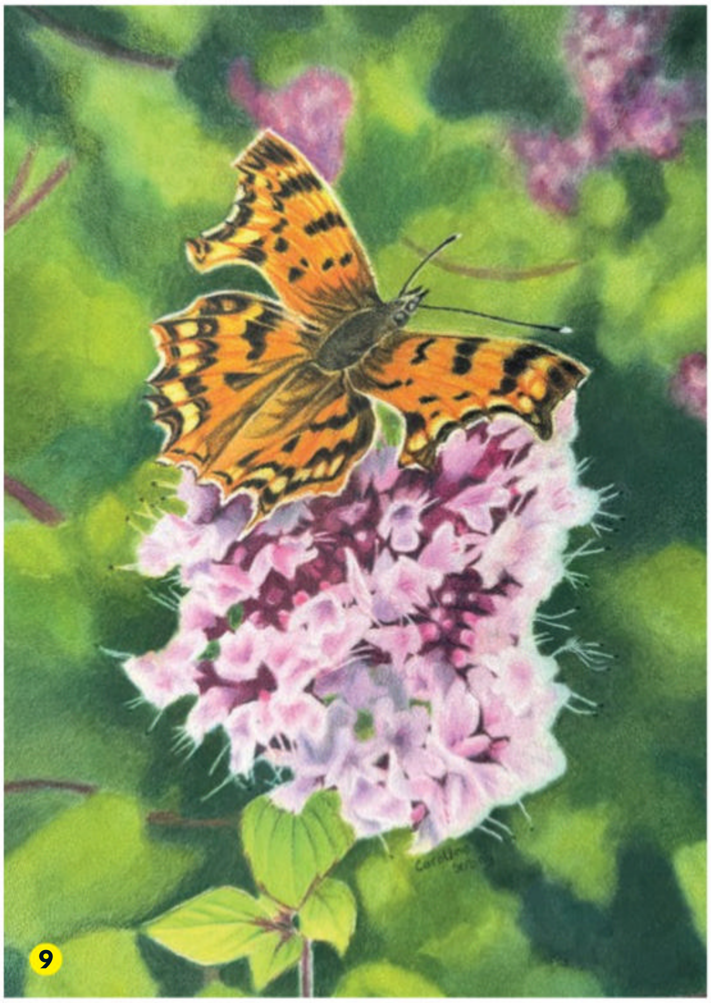

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7

ADDING THE DARKS

Once the butterfly was covered, including the body, I went back over most of it several times to establish the density of colour I wanted. I then moved to the dark browns and black marking, as it's difficult to revisit lighter colours without smudging the darks in the process. Use light pressure at first, then progress to medium and finally heavy in many layers. Don't forget the antennae.

8

ADDING WATERCOLOUR

I needed many layers of coloured pencil to make sure that it would resist the watercolour. Whilst I suspected that I might need to re-establish the antennae and the stamen, I really didn't want the watercolour to seep into the butterfly, so I went over its outline several times to avoid this. Unlike watercolour paper, watercolour on PastelMat will creep through the textured surface, even when the board is not wet, and it takes ages to dry! This gave me time to create shapes and blur edges. Prepare all the colours you need in a palette before starting on the PastelMat. Paint from pale to dark, washing your brush between colours. I added small drops of water where the paint had crept and where I wanted blurred flowers, as this pushed the green paint aside leaving room to add pink and plum mixes of colours. Kitchen roll can be used to remove any watercolour that's over the coloured pencil before leaving it to dry.

9

FINISHING TOUCHES

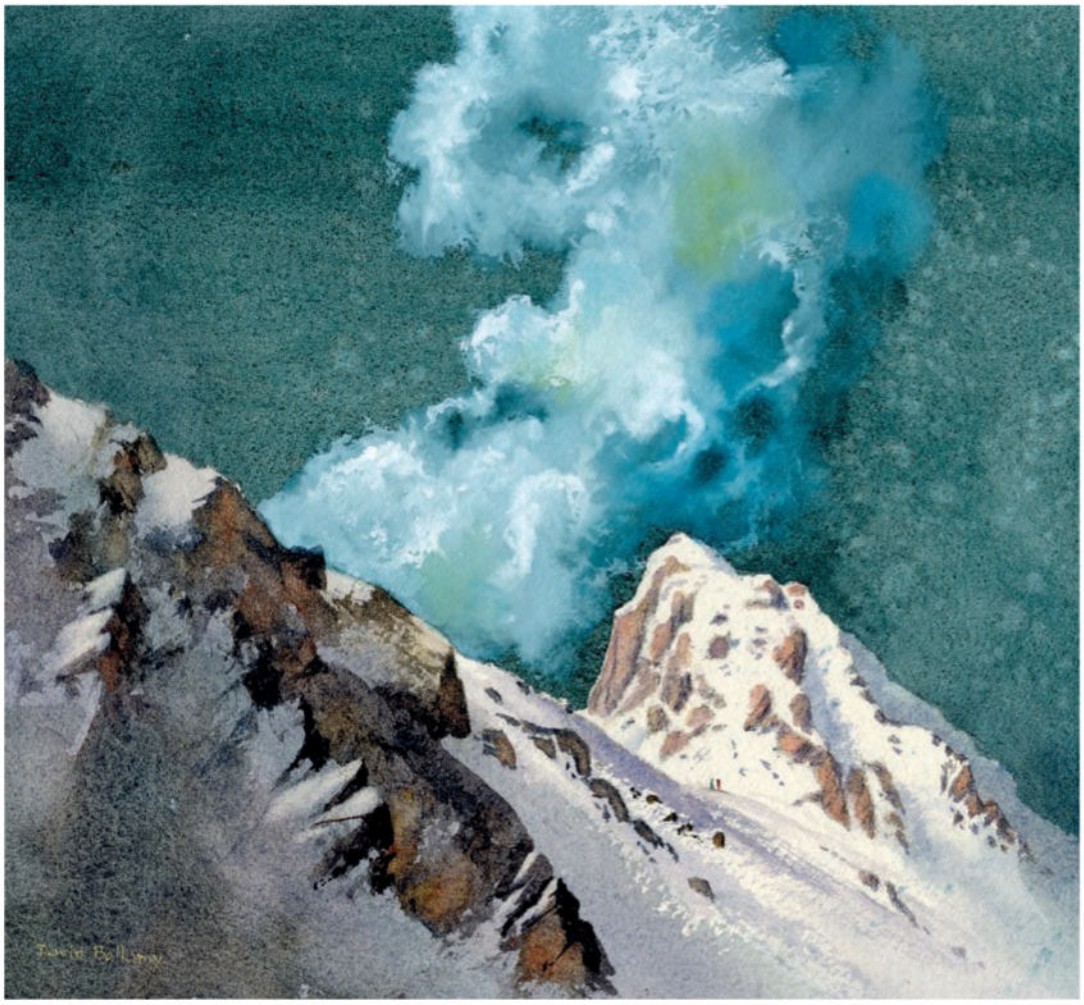
Once dry, you can reassess the painting. Leave it for a few days to see it with fresh eyes. I added layers of Black and Indigo Blue to provide more contrast on the Comma butterfly, and I redrew the antennae. I squinted to assess whether the background had little change in tonal value; alternatively, you can print/view it on camera, in black and white. With pencil, I added various greens and yellows to smooth out the transitions. You may not need to.

Exploring gouache

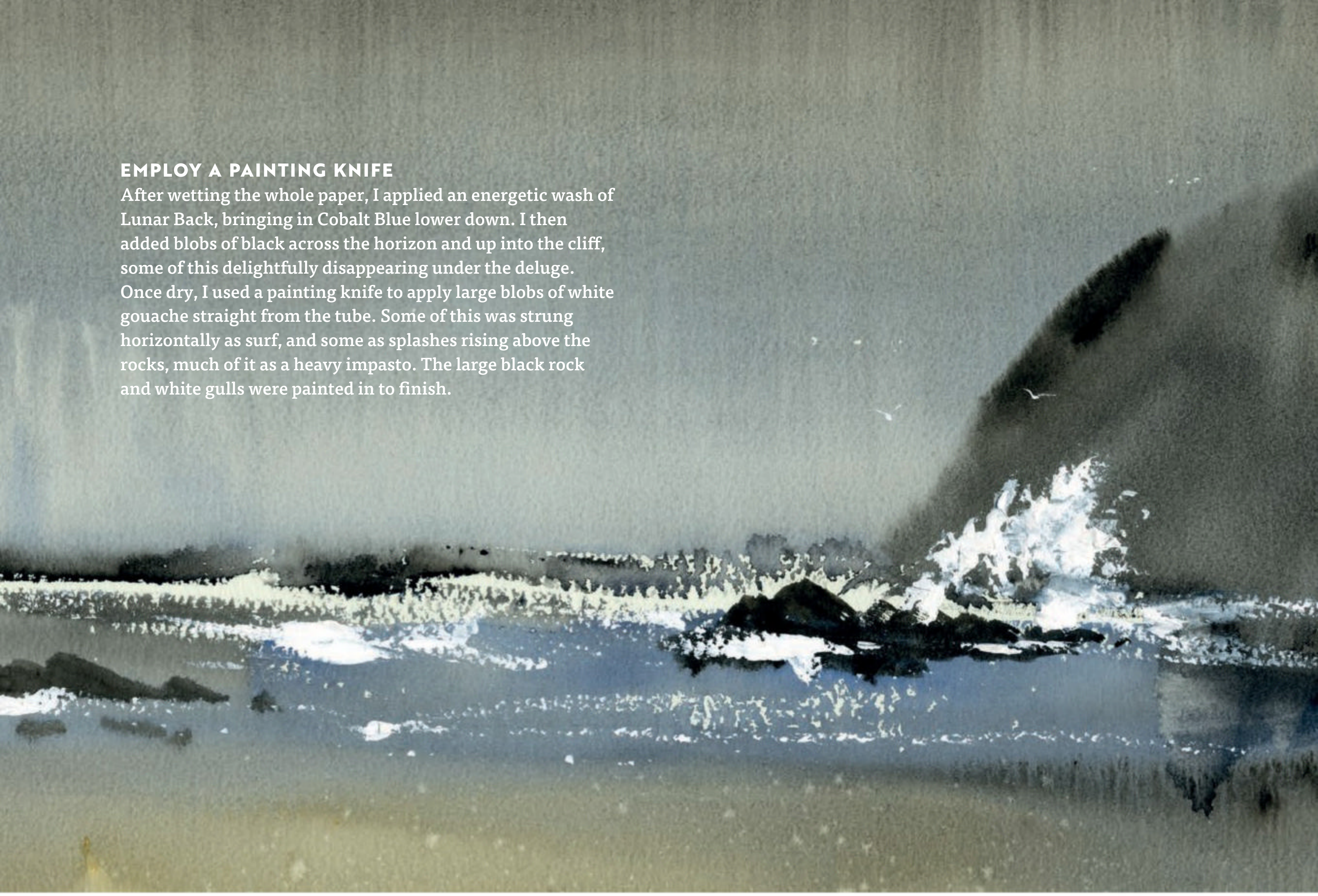
DAVID BELLAMY

is a renowned artist and author who is best known for his watercolour work. In this exclusive extract from his new book, he explains how he has been experimenting with gouache

GOUACHE IS AN OPAQUE WATER-BASED PAINT with a strong covering power which enables it to cover even dark colours on your paper. Gouache can be used neat. Squeeze the tube gently and load the brush directly. Normally, I only use gouache to add in seagulls, white masts, small flowers and other minor features, but some of the paintings that follow illustrate how much further you can take the medium. It is best not to mix it with watercolour, although I have included a rare example of a work where this has been done. Don't forget, rules are there to be broken at times, especially when experimenting.

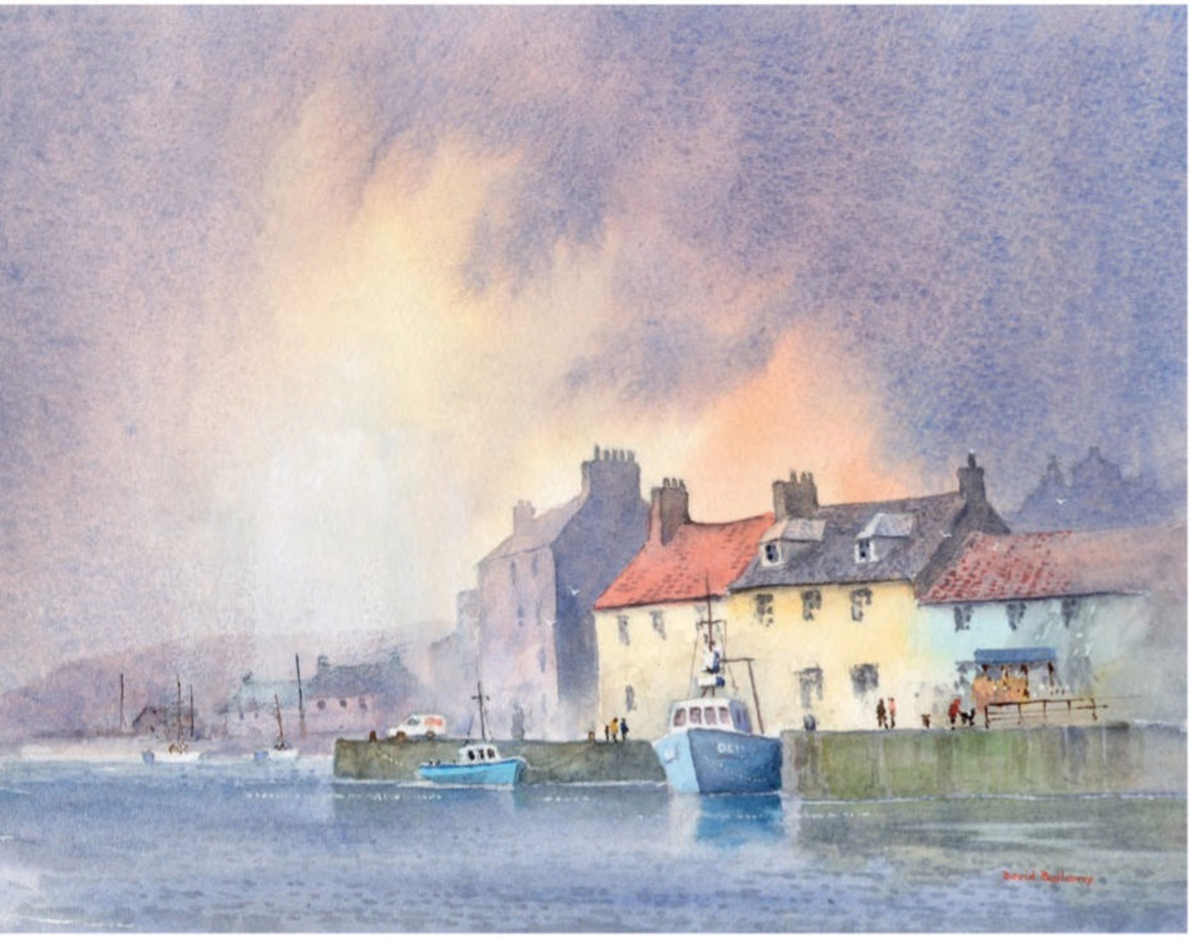


SWIRL IT!
Here, I decided to have a little fun by laying white gouache cumulus clouds over the sky of Indigo and Lunar Black while the wash was still wet. I swirled Phthalo Blue into parts of the wet gouache to create shadows in the clouds, and also dropped in a little Cadmium Yellow pale to add variety. I especially enjoyed working on the straggly bits of light clouds.



EMPLOY A PAINTING KNIFE

After wetting the whole paper, I applied an energetic wash of Lunar Back, bringing in Cobalt Blue lower down. I then added blobs of black across the horizon and up into the cliff, some of this delightfully disappearing under the deluge. Once dry, I used a painting knife to apply large blobs of white gouache straight from the tube. Some of this was strung horizontally as surf, and some as splashes rising above the rocks, much of it as a heavy impasto. The large black rock and white gulls were painted in to finish.

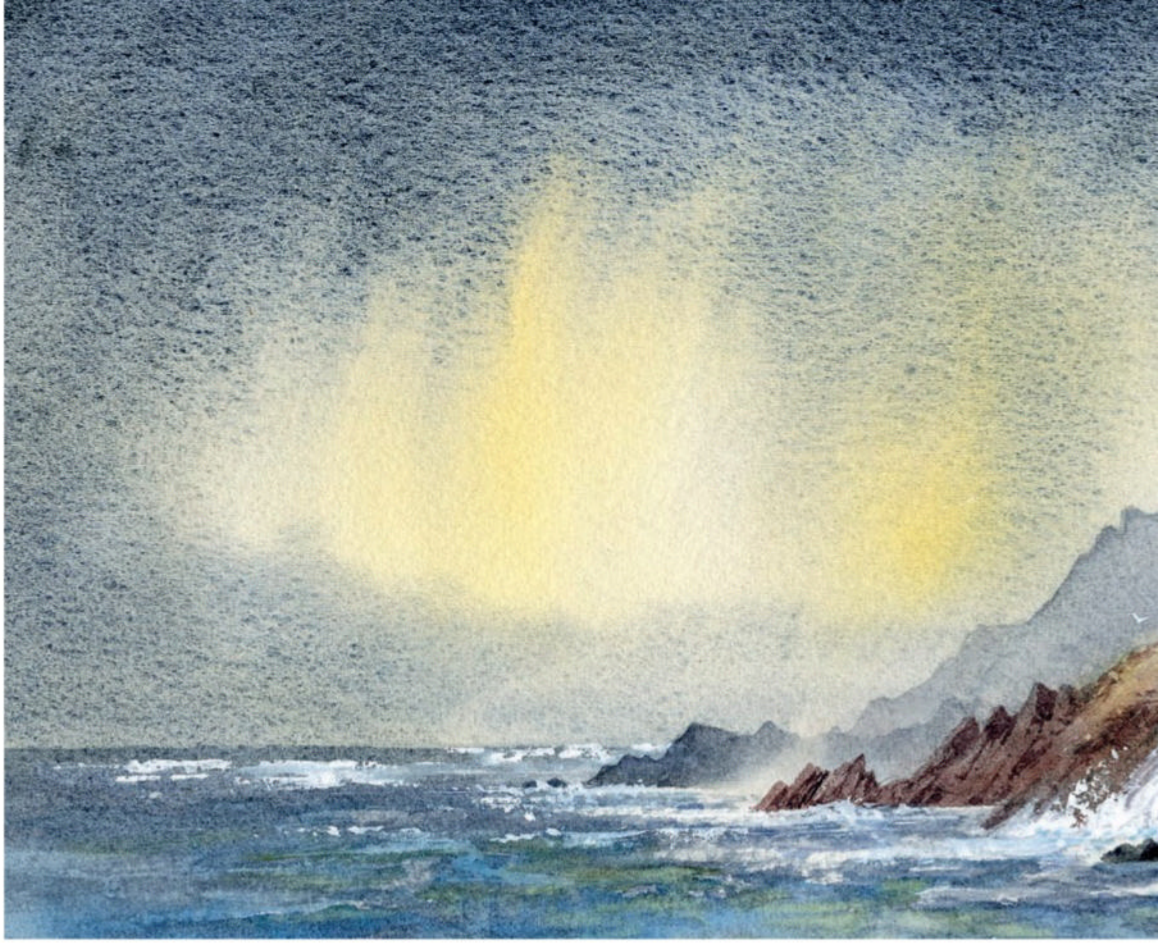


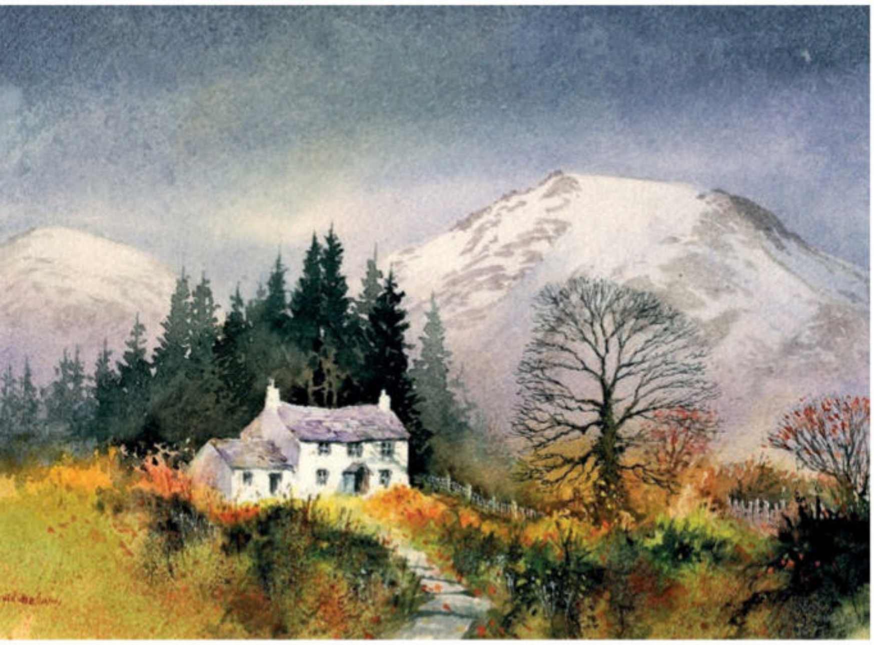
BLOB IT

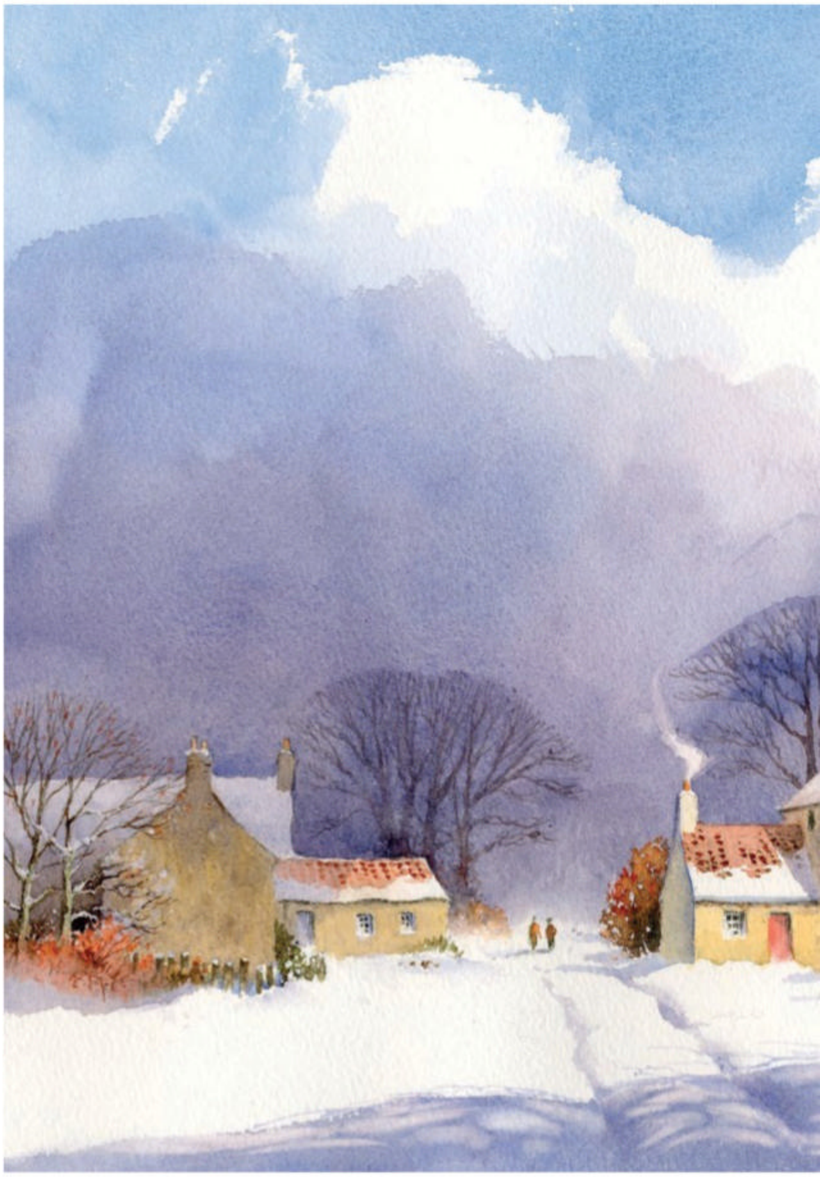
To give the impression of a sleet squall coming in from the left and blotting out the far buildings, we would normally lay a glaze with a transparent colour; washing it down over a passage already painted. Here, I instead opted to use white gouache, quite the opposite of the accepted method. The sky, distant ridge and buildings were painted first, and the paper left to dry completely. I then wetted the sky above the buildings with clean water and blobbed some white gouache into the centre of the wet area, then immediately brought it down over the buildings with a 12mm (½in) flat brush. I swept the brush down rapidly with the dry-brush method (that is, without much water on the brush). As it was rough paper, the gouache did not stick to every part of the area covered, thus creating a squall-like texture, and allowing parts of the buildings to remain visible. At the bottom of each stroke, I lifted the brush up so that the boats and harbour wall would not be affected. ▶

SWEEP IT

Of course, you don't have to include all these methods within one splash, but it does help to have part of the splash hard-edged and part soft-edged by the method of sweeping the gouache into water, or softening the edge off later with a damp brush. It can be a hit-or-miss technique, but if it ends up looking wrong then wash out the gouache with a brush, dab it with a tissue and leave it to dry. Then, have another go.





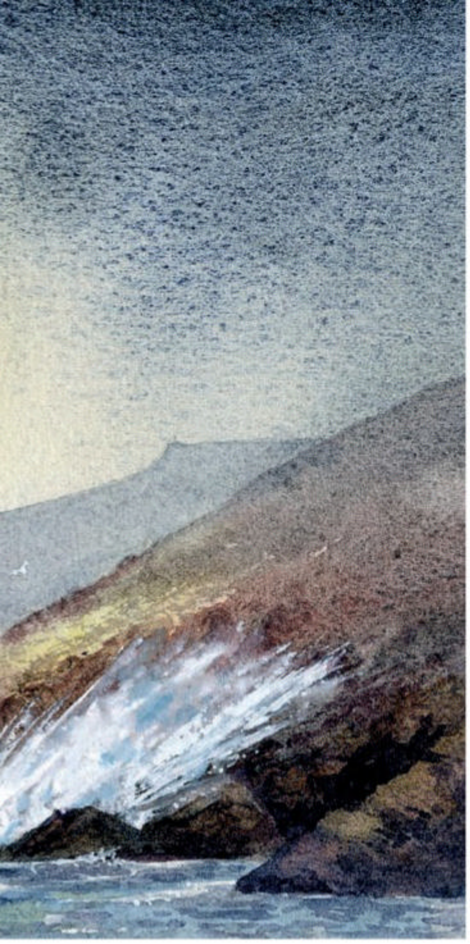


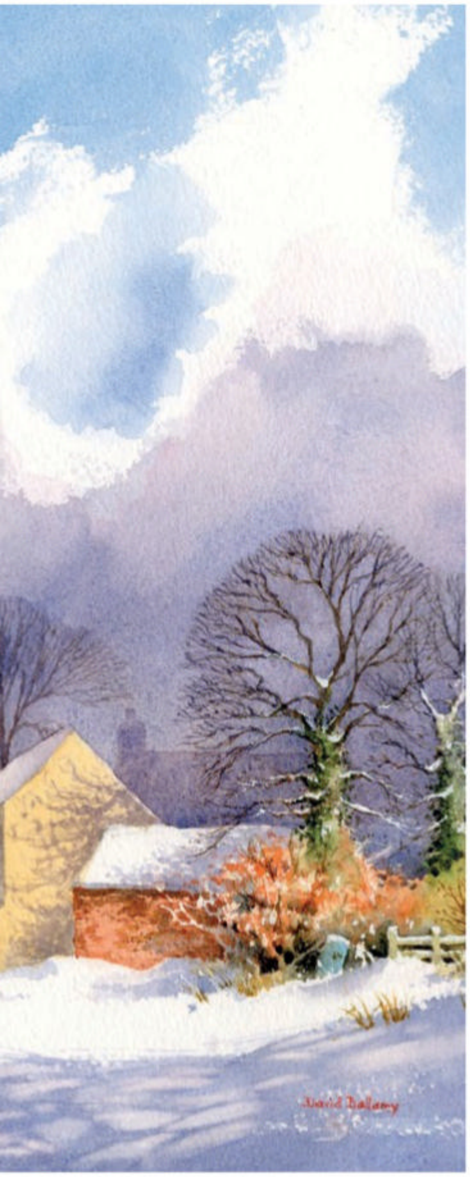
THE SMALL TOUCHES

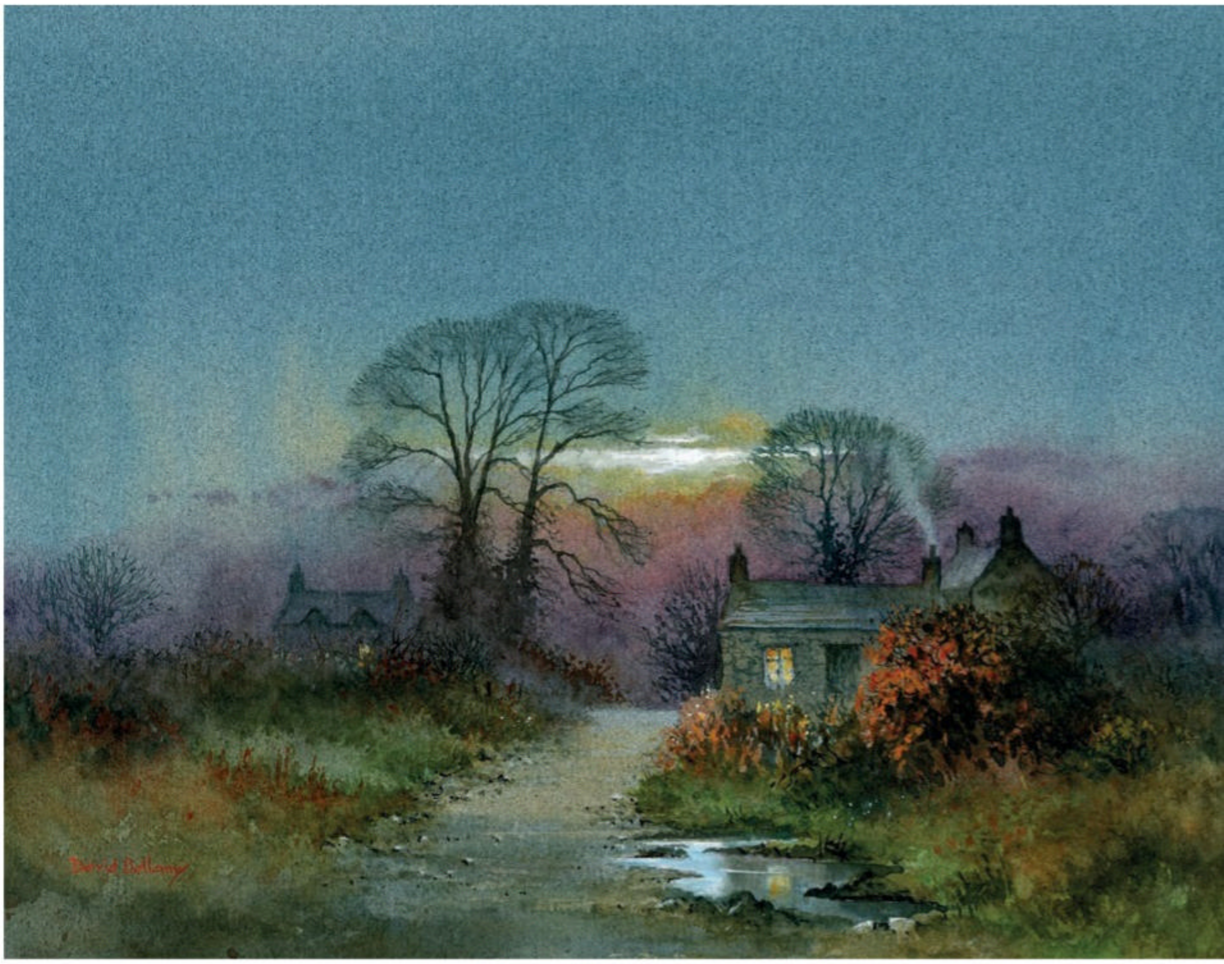
This was painted in the usual way, except that a pen loaded with a mixture of Burnt Umber and French Ultramarine was used for the fine branches on the main tree, and one with white gouache used for the fences and cow parsley. These small touches of gouache can greatly enhance a watercolour without appearing intrusive when carried out in a subtle way.

DONT COVER EVERY BRANCH

Most of the white in this painting is the pure white of the untouched paper but features like snow resting on branches and fenceposts are a little trickier to achieve. In most cases, I use white gouache to show these. There's no need to cover every branch.







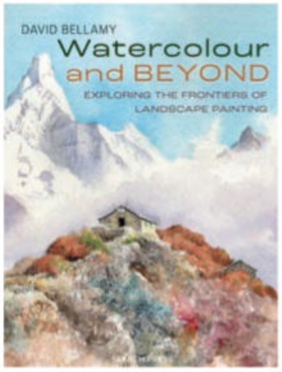
MIX YOUR COLOURS

Working on tinted papers can release the pent-up creative blocks that artists encounter from time to time. To obtain any highlights on tinted papers, gouache is almost essential to avoid the result being rather dull. Acrylic paints or light-coloured pastel pencils can also be effective. I kept the evening sky plain with just a wash of Phthalo Blue. At the bottom, a mixture of permanent Alizarin Crimson and Moonglow was applied. Most of the tree and building detail were carried out with Burnt Umber and French Ultramarine, and once all the watercolour elements had been completed, I resorted to gouache, which is vital for creating highlights on tinted papers. White gouache was used for the sliver of light in the sky, the associated reflection in the puddle, and also in the windows, though the latter was eventually overlaid with Naples Yellow and a touch of Aussie Red Gold watercolours. Pyrrol Red Gouache warmed up the bushes, the colour slightly muddied in places with Yellow Ochre.

KEYS TO SUCCESS WITH GOUACHE

- Subtle touches of white gouache can add a lively quality to a watercolour when used to depict seagulls, masts, fenceposts, plants or highlights of frothing water.
- Care is needed when introducing larger passages of gouache as this can intrude on the more transparent watercolour areas, and you need to blend these in, if possible.
- Alternatively, bold application of gouache with a brush or painting knife can also work, especially on tinted papers.

- Red, yellow and orange gouache is also effective for flowers and plants and sometimes it is worth applying white gouache first. I often use this method of working for foreground flowers. □



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About the expert

Dr Lucy Worsley until recently was joint chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces and is the author of several books. She has presented TV shows for various channels.

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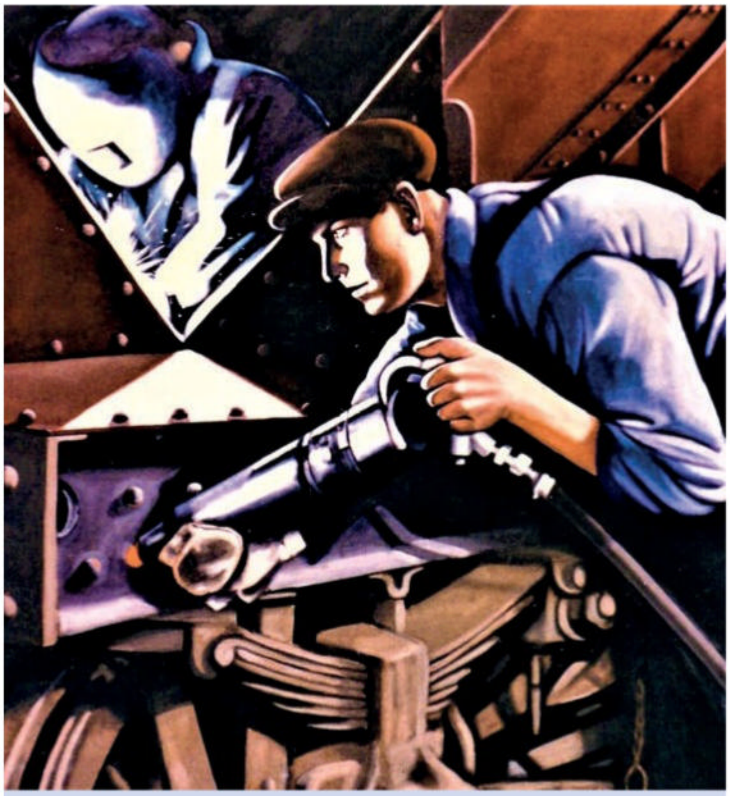


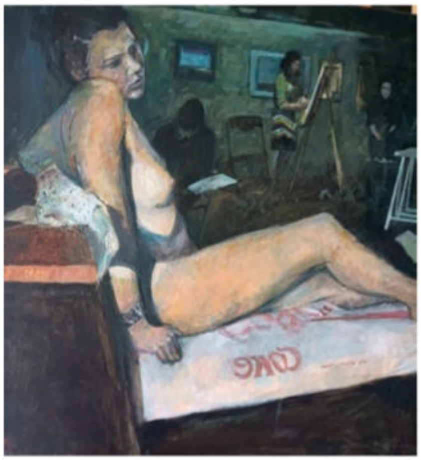
MESSAGE OF THE MONTH

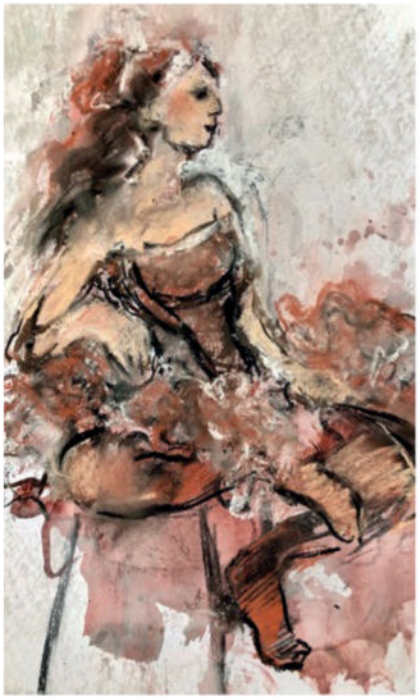
Ken White

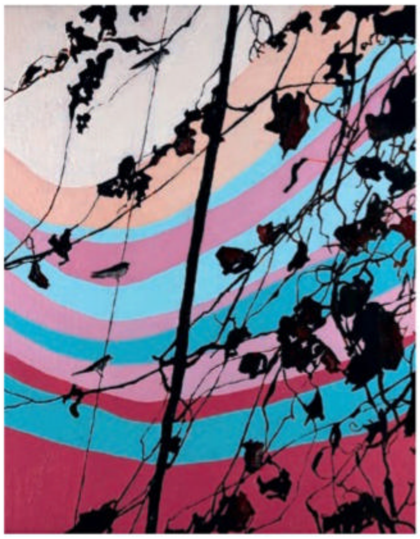
I left school when I was 15 and went straight into the Great Western Railways, following my Grandad, father and brother. I then became a signwriter. Unfortunately, I did not enjoy it very much, so it is surprising that I did a series of four-foot square paintings inspired by the railways, which I think came out fairly well.

Pauline Davidson

Your magazine has been a godsend for me. I went to art school when I was younger but couldn't do painting as there was no space in the painting department. So, I pursued illustration instead. Fortunately, many well-known artists were teaching at Camberwell just after the War. For instance, I had Michael Rothenstein, who encouraged me, and Martin Bloch in Life Drawing. We did masses of it back then – two days and three evenings a week. I've kept up Life Drawing throughout my life, even while living abroad in Italy, Canada, and France. Many thanks for your hard work. I loved the portrait painter Adebanji Alade as well as The British Art Prize 2023 first prize winner Lucy Pass.







Lindy Dunbar

I have subscribed to your super magazine for many years and thoroughly enjoyed the variety of informative and inspirational content, especially when introducing us to artists and their various working methods and practices. My son and I have an exhibition coming up. Joseph Davey is an artist and educator in Sweden, and I am an artist and tutor living in Sussex, Our work is very different but there is definitely an intriguing link and connection. *Mother & Son is on until the 11th of May 2025 at The Birley Centre, Eastbourne BN21 4EF.* □

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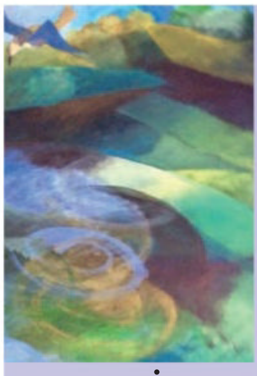

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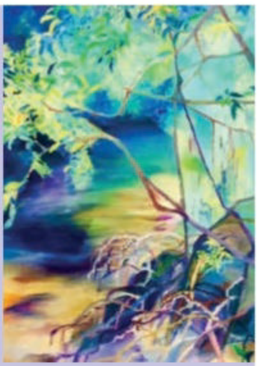

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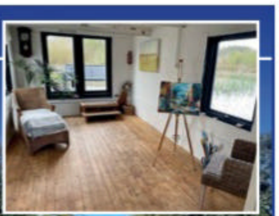

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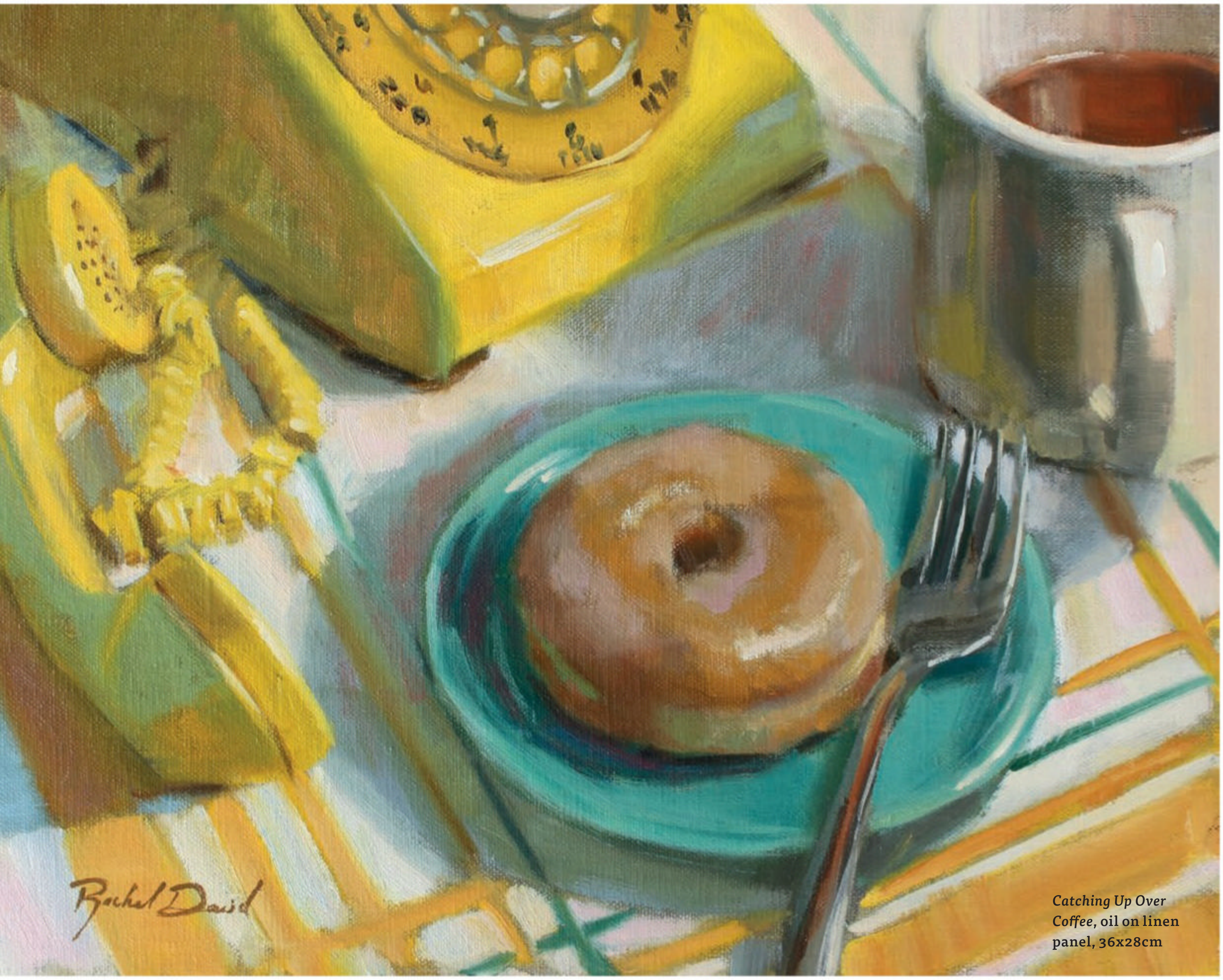

Catching Up Over Coffee, oil on linen panel, 36x28cm

Picture this

Every month, we ask an artist to tell us about a painting that is special to them. This month, we speak to self-taught artist **RACHEL DOWD**

This painting is a very comforting scene and reminds me of simpler days. Many people remember growing up with these fun rotary telephones, when mobile phones didn't exist.

You would eagerly wait for it to ring, and had no idea who was on the other end of the line. It seems like it takes more than a simple telephone call for us to feel that way today. I think we need simpler, quieter moments in our lives and should be more intentional in creating and embracing them whenever we can.

When I paint, I make my brain try to see my subject as a mosaic. I tend to see the light as a colour that is bathing the whole subject. By incorporating a little yellow in all the lighter areas, it brings a better harmony and mood than just copying what I see. I also tend to push the saturation of all the colours a little; the shadow on the back of the telephone receiver, for example, is a saturated green colour. It wasn't necessarily there in person, but I knew it would read well.

I see the contemporary minimalists' influence in this piece. Artists such as Carol Marine, Sarah Sedwick and Teddi Parker are huge sources of inspiration to me.

When creating this painting, I hoped the viewer would feel a sense of warmth and nostalgia, and maybe be inspired to call someone they love to enjoy a sweet and simple conversation.

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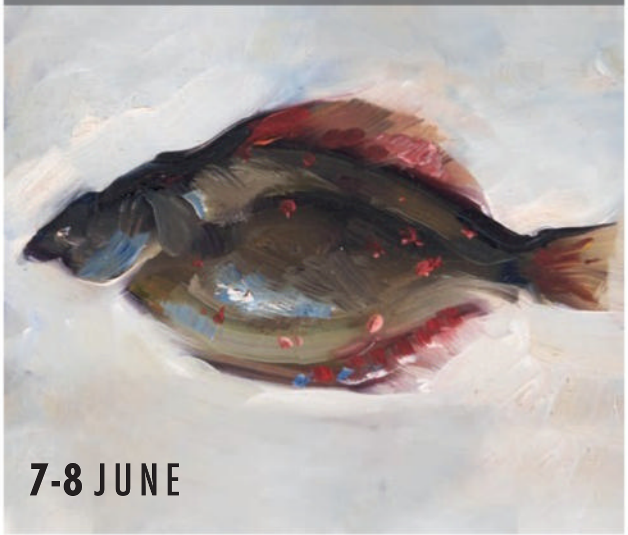

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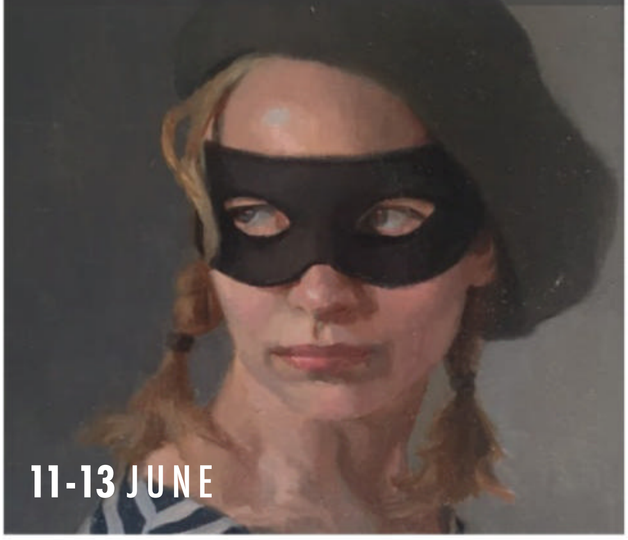

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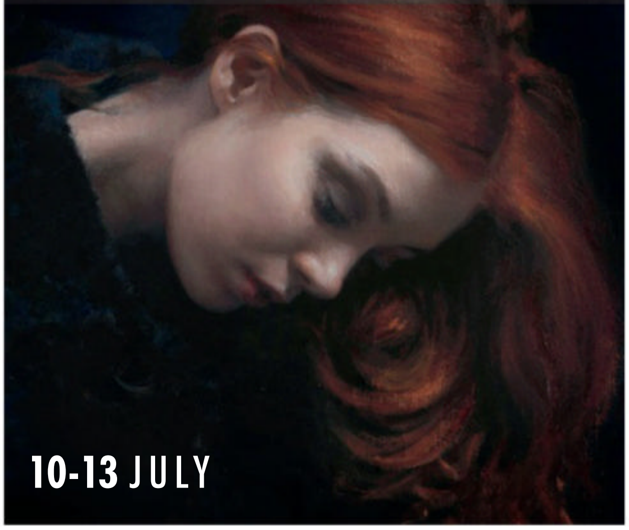

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